

**Working Mother's Psychological Well-being: A Qualitative Study Investigating  
Experiences across Multiple Domains of Life**

Carly M. Edmunds

School of Psychology  
University of Tasmania

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### **Statement of Sources**

I declare that this report is my own original work and that contributions of others have been duly acknowledged.

Carly Edmunds

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Carly Edmunds

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### **Abstract**

Research investigating the effect of working mother's increasing involvement in multiple domains of life typically assumes that negative experiences from work and family domains accumulate to detrimentally affect well-being (Tingey, King, & Riley, 1996). The aim of the present study was to investigate how working mothers' positive and negative experiences across multiple roles (e.g. work, home, sport, religion) interact to have cumulative, compensatory or segmented influences on their well-being. The lack of existing literature in this area and the need to accommodate a comprehensive conceptualisation of working mothers' multifaceted life experiences necessitated a qualitative process of analysis. Using a social constructionist epistemology data was obtained from individual, semi-structured interviews with 22 working mothers from four organisations across Tasmania and Victoria. Interviews were analysed according to the principles of Braun and Clark's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis process. Findings revealed that working mother's well-being was influenced by an association between their Type A or Type B personality characteristics and interpersonal relationship conflict or satisfaction. Results further identified that these constructs mediated, or were mediated by working mothers' cumulative, compensatory or segmented experiences across work, home, social and personal roles. The implications of these findings for theory development and intervention design are discussed.

Working mothers are increasingly required to function across multiple domains of life (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2013). Between 2010 and 2015 the proportion of working mothers participating in multiple roles (e.g. work, home, sport, religion) has risen by 21% to reach 69% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). There are currently concerns that this increasing involvement is negatively impacting working mother's psychological well-being (i.e. the positive evaluation of one's life in which an individual perceives health, happiness and prosperity) as there are a growing proportion of working mothers presenting with adverse psychological symptoms (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2014). This concern takes on additional significance given the recent World Health Organisation (2013) warnings that stress related disorders and illnesses will be the second leading cause of disability by the year 2020.

At the same time, it has been argued that the evidence, which prompted these concerns, has not adequately addressed how the comprehensive and multifaceted nature of working mothers' experiences across multiple domains influences their well-being (Tingey, Kiger, & Riley, 1996). For example, it has been contended that current literature overestimates adverse psychological symptoms and often fails to examine positive outcomes when assessing experiences across multiple domains of life (Gutek, Nakamura, & Nieva, 1981). Recent shifts in positive psychology paradigms have prompted interest in identifying and understanding such adaptive, growth and developmental outcomes across multiple life domains and how they collectively interact to have positive and/or negative implications on working mother's psychological well-being (Hart & Copper, 2001).

### **Psychological Well-Being: Positive and Negative Implications**

For some time researcher have been studying the relationship between both family-work conflict (FWC - i.e. family responsibilities impede on work demands) and work-family conflict (WFC - i.e. work demands impede on family responsibilities) and the detrimental implications on psychological well-being (e.g. Alexander & Baxter, 2005; Duxbury & Higgins, 2008; Patel et al., 2006; Pocock, 2003). Specific negative outcomes related to FWC include absenteeism, poor morale, reduced productivity (Bartone, Alder, & Vairkus, 1998) and employee retention difficulties (Greenhaus, Parsasuraman, & Collins, 2001). Conversely, WFC has been associated with family distress (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992), decreased family satisfaction (Kopelman, Grennhaus & Connolly, 1983) and increased martial tension (Brett, Stroh, & Reilly, 1992). Whilst the majority of the literature in this area focuses on the negative consequences associated with participating in work and family domains there is increasing evidence to suggest that positive outcomes (e.g. self-esteem, self-efficacy, role flexibility) can occur (Barnett & Marshall, 1992). However, as working mothers well-being literature is concerned with identifying negative or adverse outcomes of work and family interactions, the degree to which they experience positive outcomes is not clear.

Support for pursuing this line of inquiry is provided by Kanner and colleagues (1981) who argue traditional stress models overestimate the experience of adverse psychological outcomes because they only assess stress or strain symptoms and do not examine potentially positive outcomes. Through the development of the daily hassles and uplift model, Kanner and colleagues (1981) acknowledge that psychological well-being is a function of the relative balance of accumulated positive (uplifts – e.g. good weather) and negative (hassles – e.g. traffic jams) experiences.

This is consistent with the cognitive relation theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which contends that an individual's well-being can be of a positive or negative nature depending on the appraisal of the environmental situations. Together, these authors argue that in addition to examining negative stressor or strain outcomes, equal attention must be paid to understand the protective or moderating functions of an individual's positive experiences.

Hart and Cooper (2001) further contend that psychological well-being is a subjective experience that reflects an individual's interpretation of an event as positive or negative. This is consistent with French, Caplan and Harrison (1982) person-environment (P-E) fit theory, which posits that the degree of match between an individual and their perceived environment determines the nature of the experience. French and colleagues argue that a strong P-E match results in positive (i.e. growth) outcomes, whereas a strong P-E mismatch results in negative (i.e. strain) experiences. In line with this literature, Hart and Cooper (2001) argue that an individual's interpretation of their environment ultimately determines the positive and/or negative perception of their experience.

Together, this literature identifies a need for research to start by seeing working mothers' life experiences as neutral and investigate how they are interpreted as positive or negative. This will afford opportunities to extend current research on the automatic cumulative strain process to investigate the potentially positive outcomes that working mothers may perceive from participating in multiple roles (Antonovsky, 1979). This will further enable exploration into the mechanisms that underpin working mother's potentially positive experiences. Shinn and Toohey (2003) imply this is essential as acting to reduce negative outcomes may not necessarily lead to positive outcomes. It is thus necessary to examine if working

mothers perceive positive outcomes as well as, or in place of, negative outcomes (Seligman, 2011). In attempting to achieve this aim, the nature and antecedents of working mother's potentially positive experiences may be explored through a salutogenic perspective.

### **The Salutogenic Paradigm**

A salutogenic paradigm is commonly employed to explore the mechanisms responsible for creating positive psychological existence (Antonovsky, 1987). Salutogenesis is concerned with identifying how individuals cultivate personal strength through adversity and attain mental and physical health while being exposed to repetitive, challenging demands (Strumpfer, 1990). Antonovsky (1979) states the focus point within the salutogenic paradigm is thus on the positive, optimal conditions and strengths that individuals may obtain in order to manage stress rather than falling ill. A salutogenic perspective is therefore essential in examining how and why working mothers potentially perceive positive outcomes while experiencing substantial demands in multiple life facets.

The salutogenic paradigm can also be utilised to gain an understanding of how working mothers alter, change and adapt to various life demands (Antonovsky, 1979). This paradigm implies that individuals within a salutogenic orientation do not necessarily seek to escape the burden of stressors, but search for meaning and resolution in order to develop a sense of coherence (Stumpfer, 1990). This is consistent with research specifying a significant correlation between the strength of a woman's sense of coherence and their ability to cope, adapt and perceive positive experiences (Breed, Cilliers & Visser, 2006). Thus, in attempting to explore the origins of working mothers' potentially positive experiences it is imperative to



investigate how they resolve and adapt to various demands in order to obtain a sense of coherence. As salutogenic outcomes arise from how individuals interact, adapt and impose meaning on life demands it is essential to consider the nature of working mothers' experiences across multiple domains of life.

### **Interdependencies across Multiple Domains of Life**

Gutek and colleagues (1981) argue that well-being can only be understood by accommodating multifaceted experiences across diverse domains of life. This is reinforced by Hart and Coopers (2001) claim that individuals live life as a holistic entity and do not separate positive and negative experiences from one domain (e.g. home) to another (e.g. work) when evaluating life satisfaction (Hart & Cooper, 2001). So far however, existing research has predominately focused on working mother's well-being in single domains (e.g., work) or how work experiences interfere with non-work activities or vice versa (i.e. WFC or FWC) (Gutek et al, 1991). Gutek and colleagues argue that in order to fully comprehend the complexity of this interference it is essential to extend current literature by exploring the nature of multifaceted experiences as an interacting unit of analysis.

The potential for the interacting nature of multiple domains to occur is demonstrated by the dynamic equilibrium theory (Hart, Wearing & Headey, 1993), which contends that psychological well-being is a function of the interdependent influence of personal (e.g. self-efficacy), social (e.g. behavioural and emotional support) and environmental (e.g. occupational complexity) processes (Hart et al., 1993). Research utilising the dynamic equilibrium theory has identified that 48% of working women are likely to perceive that their well-being varies across their environmental context (e.g. work, home, sport, religion) (Smith & Lewis, 2011). In

line with this literature it can be argued that identifying the interacting nature of positive and negative experiences across multiple environments will provide a comprehensive insight into working mothers lived experiences and their psychological well-being. Additionally, this will afford the opportunity to identify how multiple roles interdependently interact to create cumulative, segmented and compensatory outcomes on working mother's psychological well-being.

### **Cumulative Nature of Multiple Roles**

The cumulative theory of multiple roles argues that there is a significant relationship between various domains of life (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). More specifically, this perspective implies that individual's multifaceted experiences accumulate and create positive or negative outcomes (Staines, 1980). Cumulative-negative experiences occur when involvement in multiple domains adversely affects psychological well-being as the multiplicity of roles produces a strong tendency towards conflict (Coverman, 1989). These experiences are often a result of inter-role conflict and role overload (Staines, 1980).

Inter-role conflict occurs from the perceived incompatibility of demands associated with two or more roles (Caver & Scheier, 1999). Accordingly, strain arises when an individual has goal structures that cannot be attained at the same time and thus, creates conflict between diverse roles (Greenhaus & Bautell, 1985). Research investigating inter-role conflict has identified that working mothers who devote efforts to attaining one goal will be less likely to attain another (Carver & Scheier, 1994). This research thus indicates that working mothers may potentially perceive conflict through the involvement in multiple domains.

It is also possible that acquired roles will collectively compile and

overburden working mothers through a process of role overload (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). This is consistent with Coverman's (1989) finding that perceived role overload is a major determinant in working mother's distress and satisfaction. Together, these findings imply that working mothers are likely to perceive inter-role conflict and role overload by participating in multiple demands and thus, are likely to experience cumulative-negative outcomes.

More recently, researchers have begun to consider the potentially enriching implications of multiple roles on an individual's well-being (Evans & Bartolome, 1984). This research has identified that experiences across multiple domains accumulate to create positive, functional outcomes (Meissner, 1971). This is consistent with Barnett, Marshall and Singer's (1992) finding that working mothers who participate in multiple roles are more likely to perceive resilience to psychological distress and are less vulnerable to negative mental health outcomes. Thus, in contrast to research on cumulative-negative experiences, literature investigating cumulative-positive outcomes implies that working mothers may potentially perceive mental health advantages from participating in multiple roles (Lambert, 1990). Current research has further identified that positive outcomes may also occur through a compensatory interaction between multiple roles (Edwards & Rotherbard, 2000).

### **Compensatory Nature of Multiple Roles**

Unlike cumulative theories, compensation theories imply there is a significant relationship between multiple roles whereby people attempt to make up for deficiencies in one life area through greater participation in another role (Champoux, 1978). Relying on theories of self-esteem and self-regulation researchers studying

compensation have identified how positive experiences in one role may enhance functioning in another domains of life (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). For instance, Evans and Bartolome (1984) identified that managers sought fulfillment in their family lives when they faced undesirable events at work. Therefore, the central aspect of this argument is that psychological resources in one role boost self-esteem and confidence and hence, enhances the functioning of another role (Lambert, 1990).

Compensatory mechanisms can also act to reduce the importance of a less rewarding role or result in people devoting more energy to an alternative role (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Consistent with the compensation model, Rothbard (2001) identified that individuals were more engaged in their work when they experienced a negative family event. This engagement also enabled individuals to perceive a high sense of well-being. Consistent with the cumulative-positive debate, it is therefore likely that participating in multiple domains will enable working mothers to experience positive psychological outcomes and existence. Further research has identified that in addition to cumulative and compensatory experiences, it is also possible that positive outcomes will occur through the segmentation of multiple roles (Lambert, 1990).

### **Segmented Nature of Multiple Roles**

In contrast to the cumulative and compensatory nature of experiences that can arise when multiple domains are considered simultaneously, the segmentation model posits there is no systematic relationship between non-work and work role (Staines, 1980). This model instead describes the separation of multiple roles, such that experiences within one role do not influence experiences in another (Zedeck, 1992). Given the view that work and family are interrelated (Burke & Geenglassm, 1995),

segmentation has been conceptualized as an active psychological process whereby people can choose to maintain a mental boundary between multiple roles (Lambert, 1990). For instance, Piotrkowski (1979) identified that individuals may actively suppress thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with their work role while at home and vice versa. Furthermore, this suppression may allow an individual to perceive positive outcomes as multiple demands will be less likely to intersect or accumulate (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Consistent with cumulative-positive and compensatory literature the segmentation model implies it is thus possible that working mother's participation in multiple roles will result in positive experiences and outcomes.

### **Clarification and Advancement of Current Theoretical Perspectives**

As reflected in the variety of studies addressing cumulative, compensatory and segmented theories, this is a dynamic area of research that requires much needed clarification. As working mothers are increasingly participating in multiple roles that potentially have positive and/or negative outcomes it is possible that examining their multifaceted experiences will enable this clarification to occur (Lambert, 1990). Despite these claims there is limited research examining how these perspectives cohesively interact to influence working mothers experiences across multiple domains and how these theories can be applied to gain a comprehensive conceptualization of working mother's well-being. This thus highlights the need for research to investigate how cumulative, compensatory and segmented outcomes across multiple domains inform working mothers psychological experience of well-being. Further support for pursuing this line of inquiry is provided by Linville's (1987) self-complexity theory.

## **Self-Complexity Theory**

Self-complexity is defined as the number of self-aspects or roles (i.e. sub-selves) that an individual possess (Grassberger, 1986). The self-complexity theory (Linville, 1987) posits that when compared to people with a low self-complexity, people high in self-complexity retain a greater number of self-aspects and are likely to experience self-esteem across multiple domains (Manson, 2001). Presumably, the effect of self-complexity operates by preventing the spread of activation or active spillover (Linville, 1987). For instance, high self-complexity may benefit an individual by preventing negative emotions from one self-aspect (e.g. home) from spreading to self-aspects that are unrelated to the event (e.g. work) (Grassberger, 1986). Accordingly, self-complexity theory implies that people with diverse self-aspects are better able to segment multiple roles.

Self-complexity theory further contends that multiple roles may serve as a compensatory process (Anderson, 1999). Research consistently indicates that people with multiple sub-aspects may actively engage in self affirmation, whereby they preserve their self-esteem following a threat by looking at positive qualities in another area (Linville, 1987). This occurs as individuals with high self-complexity may use their unaffected self-aspects as cognitive buffers to protect themselves against negative self-appraisals. For instance, a woman who considers herself a successful mother, accountant, wife and friend may experience a lower degree of negative self-appraisal following a divorce when compared to a women whose self-aspects are limited to being a successful lawyer and wife. This occurs as the latter cannot compensate as readily for negative perceptions that originate in one life domain. Yet, if working mothers' self-aspects are closely tied (e.g. if her husband was also a lawyer) her affectivity may be even more severely impacted with feelings

of inadequacy and stress as these experiences may evidently intersect or accumulate.

Despite Linville's (1987) initial claim that high self-complexity moderates the adverse impact of stress on well-being, other researchers (Koch & Shepard, 2004; Solomon & Haaga, 2003) argue that greater self-complexity is associated with multiple roles and greater demands and therefore, cumulative experiences. As Linville's (1987) model of self-complexity argues that self-aspects are activated in the context of relevant experiences an overlap between positive and negative self-aspects is likely to occur (Solomon & Haaga, 2003). Therefore, this position refutes the origins of self-complexity theory by instead reinforcing a cumulative argument. Research exploring the nature of self-complexity theory thus reinforces the need to examine the current contradiction that exists between cumulative, compensatory and segmented processes and how these mechanisms influence working mothers psychological well-being.

### **Multi-Level Approach to Exploring Working Mother's Well-Being**

To date, as far as the author has been able find, no study has examined how positive and negative experiences across multiple domains (e.g., family, work, social, religion etc.) interact to have cumulative, segmented or compensatory influences on working mother's psychological well-being. The lack of literature and the need to examine this phenomenon as a multi-level construct necessitated a qualitative process of analysis.

Qualitative analysis is a suitable method for understanding the increasing complexity of human social systems and to extend the limited theoretical frameworks available to understand a phenomenon - in this case, the multifaceted nature of working mothers' experiences. This also affords the opportunity to

investigate how previously unrelated theories may need to be integrated to develop a comprehensive conceptualization of working mother's well-being.

By utilising a qualitative process of analysis, the aim of the study was thus to investigate the comprehensive and multifaceted nature of working mothers' positive and negative experiences across multiple domains and how they interact to have cumulative, compensatory and/or segmented effects on their well-being. As a qualitative study, the research was guided by the research question:

*'How do positive and negative life experiences across multiple domains (e.g. home, work, social) interact to have cumulative, compensatory or segmented influences on working mother's psychological well-being?'*

### **Theoretical Perspective: Social Constructionism**

In devising this question, a social constructionist research epistemology was employed. Social constructionism is a means of illuminating the social and cultural meanings that other individuals have about the world (Mertens, 2010). This theory is based on the premise that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and thus develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, this question was devised to enable the researcher to explore working mothers' complex and varied perceptions of their experiences rather than narrowing their meanings into a few categories or ideas. This also enabled the researcher to address interactions among working mothers' multifaceted experiences. A social constructivist epistemology thus enabled the researcher to examine the formative and implicit nature of working mother's experiences across a wide variety of domains.



## Method

### Participants

Thirty-four working mothers from four organisations were invited to participate in this study via email. Twenty-eight of these working mothers expressed interest to participate. In total, 22 working mothers were recruited to participate in the study as theoretical saturation obtained (i.e. no new themes were occurring) prior to the recruitment of the additional six participants who expressed interest to participate. The participants were selected on the basis they were between 25-60 years of age, had children under the age of 16 and held current employment of at least 25 hours per week. The selection criterion was developed to ensure the sample incorporated working mothers with substantial demands across a variety of life domains.

To ensure working mothers' experiences were representative of diverse work contexts, participants were sought from a fitness academy ( $n = 4$ ), school ( $n = 4$ ) building company ( $n = 6$ ) and university ( $n = 8$ ). Participants were located in the North ( $n = 11$ ), South ( $n = 4$ ) and East ( $n = 4$ ) regions of Tasmania. Additionally, three participants from the building sector were located in Bendigo, Victoria. The characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1.

As illustrated in Table 1, participants were between 25 and 49 years of age, which broadly reflects the age range of Australian working mothers (Baxter, 2013). Most of the participants had between 1 and 2 children (86%) who were between 1 and 10 (72%) years of age. Participants had been incorporating work and family roles for between 1 and 16 years and spent on average 38 hours at work per week. Additionally, the majority of the participants were married (63%) and 54% had a degree or diploma, while 36% had a PhD or masters degree.

Table 1

*Interview Respondent Demographics*

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Respondents Age (years)	25-49	38.68	6.71
Number of Children	1-3	1.73	.70
Children Age (years)	1-16	9.45	4.80
Hours Spent at Work per Week	20-60	38.13	8.90
Years as a Working Mother	1-16	8.09	5.6

**Materials**

Materials used in this study were a recruitment flyer (Appendix B); information sheet (Appendix C); consent form (appendix D) and interview schedule (Appendix E). The recruitment flyer and information sheet detailed the aims, relevant research and requirements of the study. In line with social constructivism, the interview schedule comprised prompts and open-ended questions that the researcher believed would allow participants the opportunity to communicate how their multifaceted experiences influence their well-being. N-vivo10 was also used to generate and apply codes to the data and to examine theme co-occurrence.

**Procedure**

Managers of four organisations in the Tasmanian region were contacted and informed of the study by the researcher to gain permission to recruit staff members. Following a written letter of consent from each organisation and ethics approval from the University of Tasmania's Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix

A), recruitment flyers were emailed to managers to be circulated among female staff members through the internal mail system. Working mothers who met the selection criteria were asked to contact the researcher via email to gain further information and/or arrange a suitable time and location for the interview.

Following recruitment a 45-60 minute confidential, individual, semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant. Interviews were conducted in person ( $n = 11$ ) or via phone ( $n = 11$ ) as literature has identified a non-significant difference in response accuracy between the two modes of interviewing (Sturges & Harahan, 2004). Prior to the interview participants were provided with a number to identify them throughout the research process and were informed that any data linking them to this number will be destroyed after they have been emailed the results to this study. To prevent harm to participants, an information sheet and consent form was issued at the beginning of each interview which clearly explained that participants could conclude or re-direct the interview at any time.

All participants ( $N = 22$ ) completed the interview without re-direction and consented to recording of their interview. Following the interview the researcher transcribed the audio recordings, removed any identifiable information from the data and provided participants with the opportunity to view their transcript to make amendments as necessary via email. All participants provided amendments and/or approval of their transcripts before analysis began.

Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analysed with N-Vivo-10 by the researcher according to the principles of thematic analysis (see data analysis section) following every two interview. This enabled the researcher to identify important themes or information to be followed up in the following interviews. After six interviews were analysed themes of dispositional characteristics (i.e. traits that define

an individual's personality) and interpersonal relationship quality (i.e. the value obtained from a connection with other people) were emerging. As qualitative analysis is an iterative process that requires constant modification of the interview questions to allow for a dynamic and evolving database, additional questions were added to the interview schedule to further probe into these domains. These constructs were not originally included in the interview schedule as they are not heavily endorsed in prior working mother's well-being literature. The altered interview schedule (see Appendix F) was utilised for the remainder of the interviews ( $n = 16$ ).

Through this process similar themes emerged repeatedly across interviews which suggests a state of theoretical saturation had been reached (i.e. no new themes were occurring) (Cresswell, 2014). Consequently, the additional six working mothers who expressed interest in the study were informed why cessation of recruitment occurred, thanked and advised they would be contacted if further research prevails.

## **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was utilised as it provided the researcher with a theoretically flexible approach to researching little known phenomena with interacting variables (Holloway & Tordres, 2003). Rather than constructing theories of phenomena from available literature and then testing them, thematic analysis enables the data to be informed by the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This allows research to be generated without analytic preconceptions or pre-existing epistemological positions (Saladana, 2009). The thematic analysis procedure employed in the current study was Braun and Clarks (2006) six-phase thematic analysis process (See Table 2). This approach provides a flexible procedure for analysing qualitative data with multifaceted variables. Further thematic analysis

strategies employed within this process included contrast theoretical comparison, which was used to determine similarities and differences across working mothers' personal accounts. Additionally, code definitions and memos were written throughout the research process to embody the analytical and conceptual elements of the analysis. The outcomes were obtained by systematically describing, interpreting and integrating the data into a coherent model that parsimoniously describes a complex, multi-level phenomenon - in this case, working mother's well-being.

Table 2

*Braun and Clark's (2006) Six Phase Thematic Analysis Process*

Phase	Procedure
One	Familiarization with data
Two	Generate initial codes
Three	Search for themes
Four	Create thematic map
Five	Define and name themes
Six	Relate data to research question

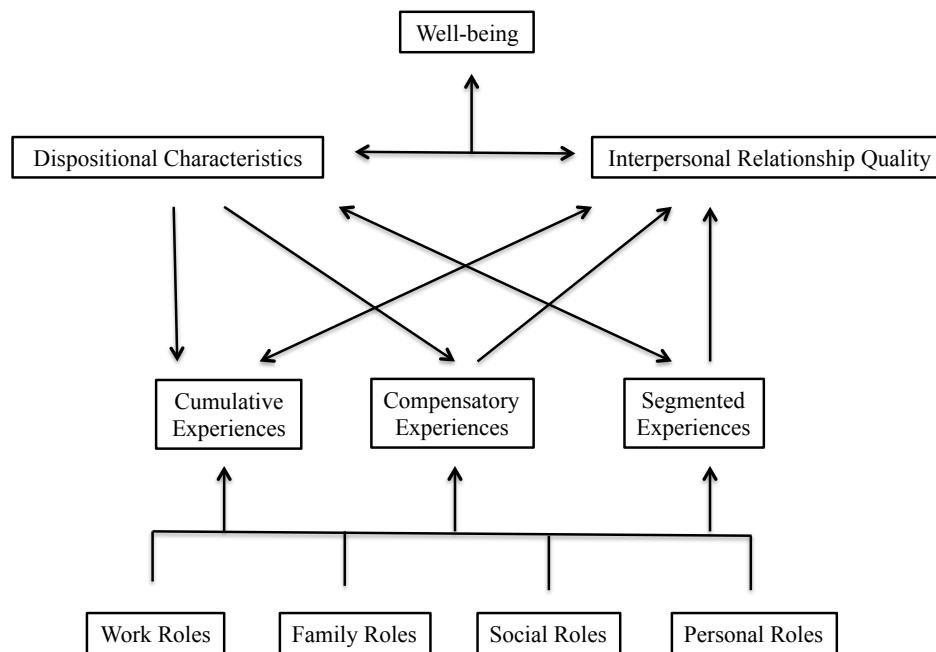
## Results

By utilising a thematic process of analysis the researcher identified that working mother's well-being was influenced by an association between their dispositional characteristics and interpersonal relationship quality. The results further revealed that working mother's dispositional characteristics and interpersonal relationship quality mediated, or were mediated by the cumulative, compensatory and segmented nature of their work, home, social and personal roles (see figure 1). Accordingly, working mother's well-being was depicted by three major levels of

interactions, which embody a number of related major and minor themes. These associations are:

1. The relationship between dispositional characteristics and interpersonal relationship quality on working mother's well-being.
2. The relationship between cumulative, compensatory and segmented experiences and dispositional characteristics and interpersonal relationship quality.
3. The relationship between work, family, social and personal roles and cumulative, compensatory and segmented experiences.

Figure 1 introduces the overall findings and represents how each of these associations interact. Each association will be discussed in the forthcoming sections and depicted in greater detail with the aid of verbatim quotes and figures.



*Figure 1.* A multi-level model of working mother's well-being representing major categories and interactions

### **Association One: Dispositional Characteristics and Interpersonal Relationship Quality**

Many working mothers discussed how their well-being was influenced by a bidirectional association between their personal dispositional characteristics and their interpersonal relationship quality. Upon analysis, it was evident that working mothers were likely to possess dispositional characteristics related to Type A personality (i.e. a personality type associated with being ambitious, aggressive, controlling and time-conscious) or dispositional characteristics related to Type B personality (i.e. a personality type associated with being patient, relaxed and easy-going). The analysis further revealed that these personality traits were associated with working mother's interpersonal relationship conflict (i.e. negative emotional interactions between people) or interpersonal relationship satisfaction (i.e. positive emotional interactions between people).

**Type A Personality Traits and Relationship Conflict:** Upon analysis the researcher identified that working mother's overall sense of well-being was reduced by an association between Type A related personality traits and interpersonal relationship conflict. More specifically, working mother's discussed how their tendency to be highly anxious, achievement oriented, controlling, impatient and organised (i.e. Type A personality traits) elicited relationship conflict with their partner and children, which in turn, lowered their well-being. For instance, respondents expressed how anxiety and impatience caused them to feel irritated and frustrated with their partner and children. High achievement orientation also resulted in relationship strain as working mothers resented their partners for their increased workload. Additionally, organisational characteristics caused working mothers to

become irritated with their partners and children, while control traits caused partners to become aggravated with working mothers, which evidently resulted in relationship conflict. These associations are demonstrated in Table 3 and Figure 2.

Table 3

*Selected Quotes of Relationship Conflict elicited by Type A Personality Traits*

Anxiety	<p>“...I think it’s just who I am; I get very anxious about everything and that definitely influences my relationship with others. I mean, when my husband takes my daughter he just doesn’t think about what he needs to take... I suppose because I do get anxious about that we do have more problems in our relationship. I think as well my daughters can see that anxiety and she often gets upset with me. I think that just contributes to my anxiety issues and therefore reduces my well-being.”</p>
Achievement Oriented	<p>“Well I probably don’t help the situation, because when I do something I need to do it well. I suppose therefore that caused more tension in our relationship as I was constantly busy trying to make up for everything that he (partner) didn’t do well. That conflict was really bad for my health.”</p>
Control	<p>“P: I suppose, I like having that control over him (partner) and what he does, as bad as that sounds. I think it is just because of who I am and what I do. I: How does that influence your relationship? P: Oh he hates it. Me wanting that level of control would have to cause the most issues in our relationship by far. I think that conflict is unhealthy for me for sure.”</p>
Impatience	<p>“I suppose I am just impatient. If I asked him (partner) to get some groceries, he often wouldn’t do it until the day after. That just causes more conflict between us and causes me to stress. I think as well if I get impatient with my daughter that also causes some problems.”</p>
Organisation	<p>“Oh um just because of his (partner) work, because I’m so organised and time conscious I can’t deal with his changing hours. We are both different in that way and I think that lowers my well-being. I just struggle to deal with the uncertainty of his job.”</p>

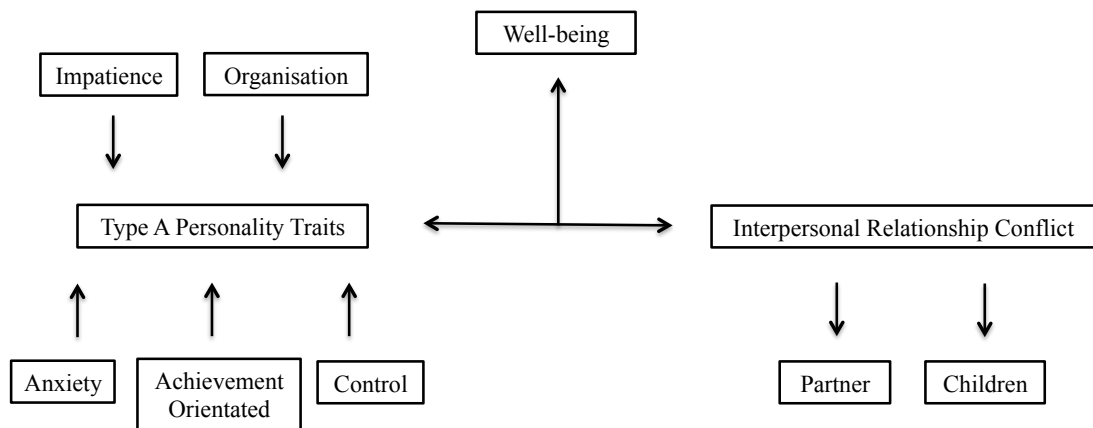


The bidirectional nature of this relationship was also identified as working mothers further explained how interpersonal relationship conflict with their partner and children elicited anxiety, impatience and organisation (i.e. Type A related personality traits). For example, working mothers discussed how they became anxious when they experienced relationship strain or conflict with their partner and children. Working mothers further explained how impatience was a result of tension between themselves and their partner. A lack of communication with their partner, as a result of relationship conflict, also triggered working mothers to adopt organisation skills. Again, these associations were perceived by working mothers to reduce their overall sense of well-being. Table 4 and Figure 2 demonstrate these associations.

Table 4

*Selected Quotes of Type A Personality Traits elicited by Relationship Conflict*

Anxiety	“I think maybe the fighting with my partner and also my children just causes me to become anxious and cause my health to deteriorate.”
Impatience	“I think sometimes when my husband and myself fight that just brings out more of my impatience, which is not good for my health. I find I become snappy and it will often result in me being more impatient and a lot shorter with people.”
Organisation	“I am pretty organised as it is, but if I disagree with my husband and if I am on ‘no talking terms’ with him I have to be extra organised as we are not communicating...I think this definitely increases my stress levels.”



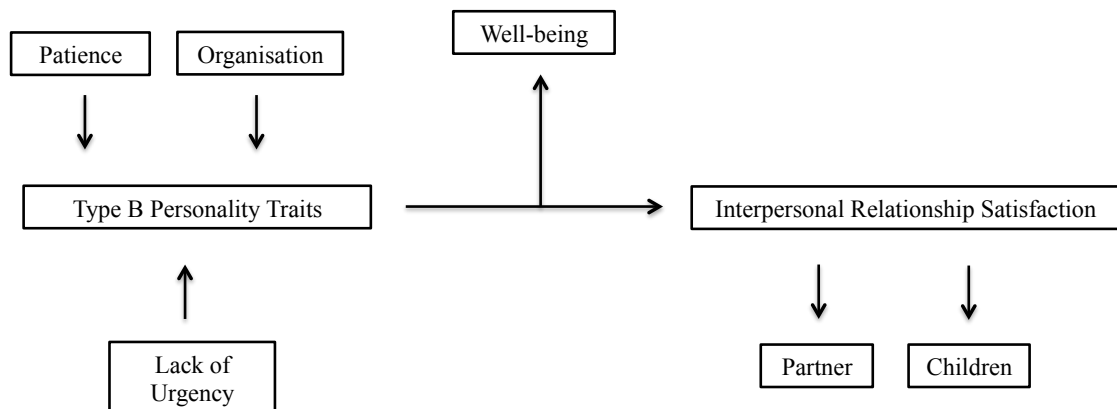
*Figure 2.* A model depicting how working mother's well-being is influenced by an association between their Type A personality traits interpersonal relationship conflict

**Type B Related Personality Traits and Relationship Satisfaction:** Upon analysis it was further evident that working mother's overall sense of well-being was increased by an association between Type B related personality traits (i.e. organisation, patience and lack of urgency) and interpersonal relationship satisfaction. For example, working mothers discussed how their organisation skills and patience enabled them to devote quality time to their partner and children, which in turn, enabled them to maintain or further develop their relationship with these social counterparts. Further, working mothers explained how possessing a lack of urgency allowed them to appreciate the time spent with their children and therefore perceive a sense of relationship satisfaction. Together, these associations enabled working mothers to experience a high sense of well-being. Table 5 and Figure 3 illustrate these associations.

Table 5

*Selected Quotes of Relationship Satisfaction elicited by Type B Personality Traits*

Organisation	“Oh I am a very organised person... I think all of this helps with keeping on top of things which helps with my well-being but also allows me to spend needed time with my partner and children. I think if I didn't have this and didn't have time with my partner and the kids we would not have the great relationship that we do now and my well-being would probably suffer.”
Patience	“I think I am quite a patient person, which helps with dealing with the demands at home and my well-being. I think this helps me keep on track with my husband and children and their expectations which allows us to get along well and allows me to experience high well-being.”
Lack of urgency	“I don't think I am a stressed or time urgent person which helps my relationship with my son... We just go with the flow and that is really nice and helps with my well-being.”



*Figure 3.* A model depicting how working mother's well-being is influenced by an association between their Type B personality traits and interpersonal relationship satisfaction.

### **Association Two: Cumulative, Compensatory and Segmented Outcomes**

Analysis revealed that the association between working mother's Type A or Type B personality traits and their interpersonal relationship conflict or satisfaction mediated, or was mediated by the cumulative, compensatory or segmented nature of their experiences.

**Cumulative-Negative Experiences:** Many working mothers discussed difficulties in coordinating various roles and how the accumulation of multiple demands resulted in strain or negative experiences. These experiences are represented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Selected Quotes of Cumulative-Negative Experiences*

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<p>"I suppose the demands just accumulated over time and the stresses at work were gradually increasing the strain at home."</p>
<p>"Your body keeps going at 100 miles an hour just to deal with everything...Everything just builds up and the stresses just keep coming."</p>
<p>"Sometimes I don't sleep really well and I think that is because when you are really stressed you just can't stop thinking about everything and can't switch off. That is definitely a negative for me and I definitely cannot handle that very well...But I wake up the next morning and think right I just have to get it done so I just go for it. This is bad, because I'm constantly stressed."</p>

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**Cumulative-Negative Experiences and Type A Personality Traits:** Working mothers discussed how their tendency to be achievement oriented, anxious and committed (i.e. Type A related personality traits) were associated with cumulative-negative experiences. More specifically, working mother's discussed how their commitment and achievement orientation caused multiple roles to accumulate and

result in distress and strain. Accumulated roles were also a function of working mother's tendency to perceive anxiety within the work domain. Table 7 and Figure 4 demonstrate these interactions.

Table 7

*Selected Quotes of Cumulative-Negative Experiences elicited by Type A Personality Traits*

Achievement Oriented	"I'm always trying to make everything perfect and you just can't do that in a demanding job because things just build up and you become stressed."
Anxiety	"I worry lots, so I will go home and get my kids into bed and then I will need to check my email because I feel like if I don't I will get really worried about what could be there. So that is bad because I feel as though my anxiety around those things cause me to not switch off. I think that is why things pile up and I collapse and get sick."
Commitment to Roles	"So I am getting better at saying no, which I am traditionally not good at because I like to commit to everything I do, so I am trying hard to do that... I think by me wanting to commit to everything I do I just overload myself in lots of different areas, which means I eventually just burnout."

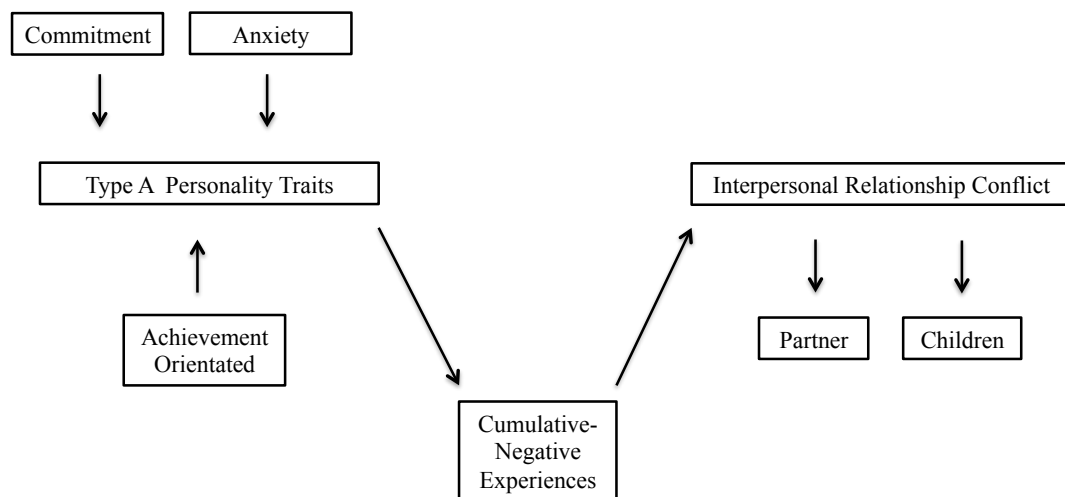
***Cumulative-Negative Experiences and Interpersonal Relationship Conflict:***

Working mothers further discussed how cumulative-negative experiences were associated with interpersonal relationship conflict. In particular, as demands across multiple roles increased working mothers experienced strain and conflict with their partner and children. This relationship is demonstrated in Table 8 and Figure 4.

Table 8

*Selected Quotes of Relationship Conflict elicited by Cumulative-Negative Experiences*

Relationship Conflict with Partner	<p>“I suppose you could say that had a lot to do with my separation because I took on the role of doing everything ...I just snapped at my partner for not doing anything which caused the majority of our conflict.”</p>
Relationship Conflict with Children	<p>“P: Oh I feel as though I am run off my feet all the time, then I become tired and this makes me more emotional and frustrated with people. I: Can you explain to me who you become frustrated with? P: Probably my little boy, as much as I hate that and feel guilty for it. I suppose it is because he is the one I spend the most time with. I just find sometimes I snap at him more regularly and tell him off for things I don’t usually growl at him about.”</p>



*Figure 4. A model summarizing the association between working mother’s Type A personality traits, cumulative-negative experiences and interpersonal relationship conflict*

**Cumulative-positive experiences:** Working mothers discussed how the accumulation of multiple demands also enabled them to experience positive growth outcomes and enriching experiences. These experiences are depicted in Table 9.

Table 9

*Selected Quotes of Cumulative-Positive Experiences*


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	“Sometimes all of my jobs in various aspect of my life do build up and reach this threshold where things do get stressful but I am okay with that and sometimes I actually see the positives in that because I like to be busy.”
	“You know sometimes I feel like everything builds up but instead of being defeated by that it often allows me to work harder and achieve more so I actually think it is a positive sometimes.”

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***Cumulative-Positive Experiences and Type B Personality Traits:*** Analysis

of working mother’s personal accounts revealed that their cumulative-positive experiences were associated with Type B related personality traits (i.e. flexibility and a lack of urgency). For example, respondents discussed how their flexibility and lack of urgency enabled them to manage multiple demands and perceive positive experiences under substantial constraints. These associations are illustrated in Table 10 and Figure 5.

Table 10

*Selected Quotes of Cumulative-Positive Experiences elicited by Type B Personality Traits*


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Flexibility	“I am pretty flexible with everything I do. I think if you are flexible in dealing with lots of demands then when they build up you can just prioritise and get them done when needed. I think if I wasn’t so flexible I would really struggle to enjoy all of my roles within my life.”
Lack of Urgency	“Um, I think I’m pretty laid back with when everything has to be done which just allows me to enjoy everything I do. Yes I’m busy but I enjoy that because I just take my time to get things done”

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### *Cumulative-positive Experiences and Interpersonal Relationship*

**Satisfaction:** Working mothers discussed how their cumulative-positive outcomes enabled them to experience relationship satisfaction with their partner and children. They discussed how accumulated positive experiences allowed them to communicate with their social counterparts and thus perceive a high degree of satisfaction within these relationships. These associations are demonstrated in Table 11 and Figure 5.

Table 11

*Selected Quotes of Relationship Satisfaction elicited by Cumulative-Positive Experiences*

Relationship Satisfaction with Partner and Children	“I don’t mind having lots to do because it allows me to have multiple things to talk about. For instance, sometimes I will talk about exciting things that happen at work at home because it allows us to connect and communicate as a family (partner and children) which I think is healthy to do.”
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The bidirectional nature of this relationship was also identified as working mothers further explained how interpersonal relationship satisfaction allowed them to experience cumulative-positive outcomes. For example, working mothers discussed that relationship satisfaction with their children and partner enabled them to experience positive, rather than negative outcomes from participating in multiple demands. These experiences are illustrated in Table 12 and Figure 5.

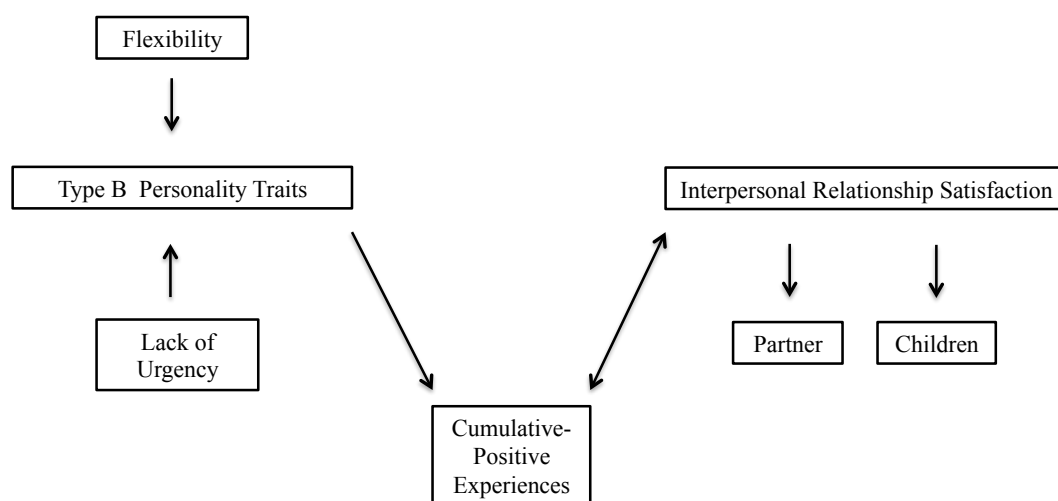


Table 12

*Selected Quotes of Cumulative-Positive Experiences elicited by Relationship Satisfaction*

Relationship Satisfaction with Partner and Children

“I often think that if I didn’t have such a healthy relationship with my partner and children I wouldn’t be able to enjoy all of the things I do. I think we work nicely together and if it wasn’t for that having so many roles would be stressful rather than actually enjoyable.”



*Figure 5.* A model summarizing the association between working mother’s Type B personality traits, cumulative-positive experiences and interpersonal relationship satisfaction

**Compensatory Experiences:** Working mothers expressed how participating in multiple roles also enabled them to experience compensatory outcomes. Respondents identified that participating in a role that elicits a positive experience could reduce the impact of a negative experience in another domain. These experiences are demonstrated in Table 13.

Table 13

*Selected Quotes of Compensatory Experiences*


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	<p>“I think having lots of different roles enables me to stay positive. For instance, the other day I had a really bad day at work but I was able to go home to a beautiful family so that made it all better.”</p> <p>“I love having multiple things to do in life. It always allows me to be positive. I mean if I have a bad experience in one area then I just take on a different role that makes me feel more positive.”</p>
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***Compensatory Experiences and Type B Personality Traits:*** Working

mothers discussed how compensatory experiences were associated with their tendency to be open-minded and practical (i.e. Type B related personality traits). More specifically, respondents explained how being practical enabled them to reduce the impact of a negative experience by focusing on a positive experience. They further discussed how being open-minded enabled them to compensate for negative events by utilising advice from other people. These experiences are demonstrated in Table 14 and Figure 6.

Table 14

*Selected Quotes of Compensatory Experiences elicited by Type B Personality Traits*


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Open-minded	<p>“I guess I am always willing to take advice on from others so if I think they are doing something that could work for me then I will attempt to have a go at that. I think sometimes taking on advice allows me to reduce negative experiences that may eventuate in different areas.”</p>
Practicality	<p>“I am probably also quite a practical person so that has helped with the emotional component. So I have been able to say okay the benefit of returning to work a little sooner than planned is going to be bigger than the discomfort while we settle in.”</p>

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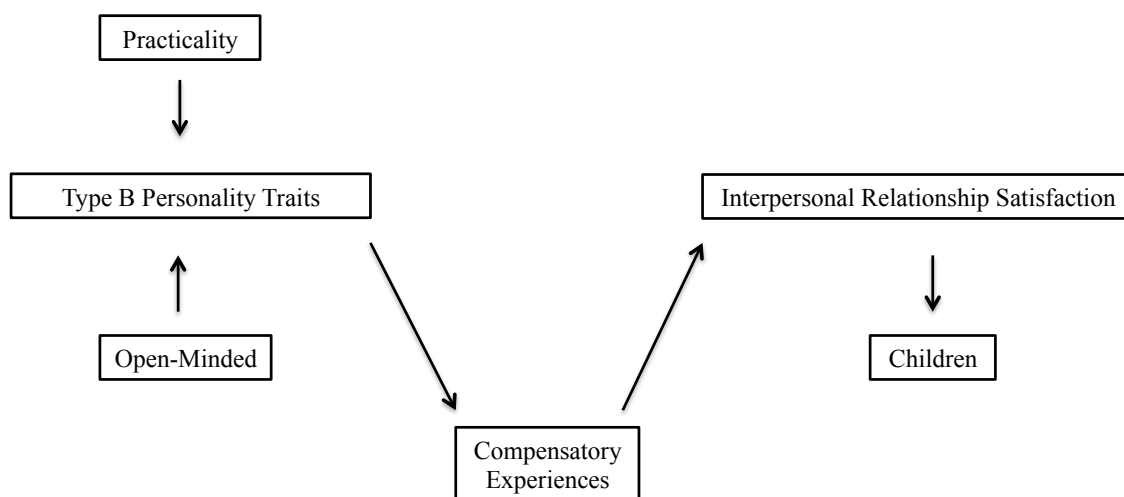
***Compensatory Experiences and Relationship Satisfaction:*** Working

mothers expressed how compensatory experiences resulted in relationship satisfaction with their children. Respondents discussed how relationship satisfaction with their children frequently occurred when they attempted to focus and act on positive experiences (c.f. negative experiences). This relationship is represented in Table 15 and Figure 6.

Table 15

*Selected Quotes of Relationship Satisfaction elicited by Compensatory Experiences*

Relationship Satisfaction with Children	“I think sometimes by having multiple roles I am able to focus on the positive aspects which helps reduce the negatives. This often helps with maintaining a good relationship with my kids; I feel then that I can focus on positive outcomes around them which makes me less stress and be more happy with them.”
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*Figure 6.* A model summarizing the association between working mother's Type B personality traits, compensatory experiences and their interpersonal relationship satisfaction

**Segmented Experiences:** Working mothers expressed how they were able to separate their experiences across multiple domains and perceive positive outcomes. These experiences are demonstrated in Table 16.

Table 16

*Selected Quotes of Segmented Experiences*

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<p>“I find I keep my work pretty separate from my home life. I’m at work to work and at home to spend time with the children...If I have had a bad day at work, I don’t go home to vent about it and I don’t often come to work and discuss home.”</p> <p>“Ah I think I just need that balance between work and home. I don’t like bringing work home or things from home, like the stressors, to work. I pretty much try to keep them separate.”</p>
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**Segmented Experiences and Type A Personality Traits:** Analysis further revealed that working mothers’ segmented experiences were associated with Type A related personality traits (i.e. control, impatience and time-management). For example, working mothers discussed how their time-management skills and tendency to control their environment enabled them to separate their multiple demands. Further, impatience enabled working mothers to become efficient within their roles and thus reduce the interference between multiple domains. These relationships are demonstrated in Table 17 and Figure 7.

Table 17

*Selected Quotes of Segmented Experiences elicited by Type A Personality Traits*


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Control	“I think by having control over many of my roles I am able to make sure I keep them quite separate. This is important for me as I find keeping them separate helps me stay positive.”
Impatience	“I think that because I am quite an impatient person I am able to work quite quick which helps me then not need to take work home or home to work. I think it helps me keep my social life pretty separate as well. I don’t feel the need to vent about work because my impatience allows me to get on top everything.”
Time-management	“I’m quite a quick worker so I don’t usually need to take work home. ..You have to be quick and thorough and be organised and make sure you always have the information. I think by having these skills I am able to keep work, home and my social life pretty separate”

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The bidirectional nature of this relationship was also identified as working mothers further explained how compartmentalising their roles and experiences across multiple domains enabled them to perceive control and organisation (i.e. Type A related personality traits). More specifically, respondents discussed how segmented experiences enabled them to perceive control and a degree of organisation in completing their demands. This association is described in Table 18 and Figure 7.

Table 18

*Selected Quotes of Type A Personality Traits elicited by Segmented Experiences*


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Control	“Sometimes when I am able to separate all of my roles I think I feel more in control. For instance, when I can leave work things at work I feel more like I am more in control of my life and demands. This is a really empowering feeling”.
Organisation	“I think when I am organised I am more likely to keep more roles compartmentalised... This is really great because it allows me to get things done and make deadlines.”

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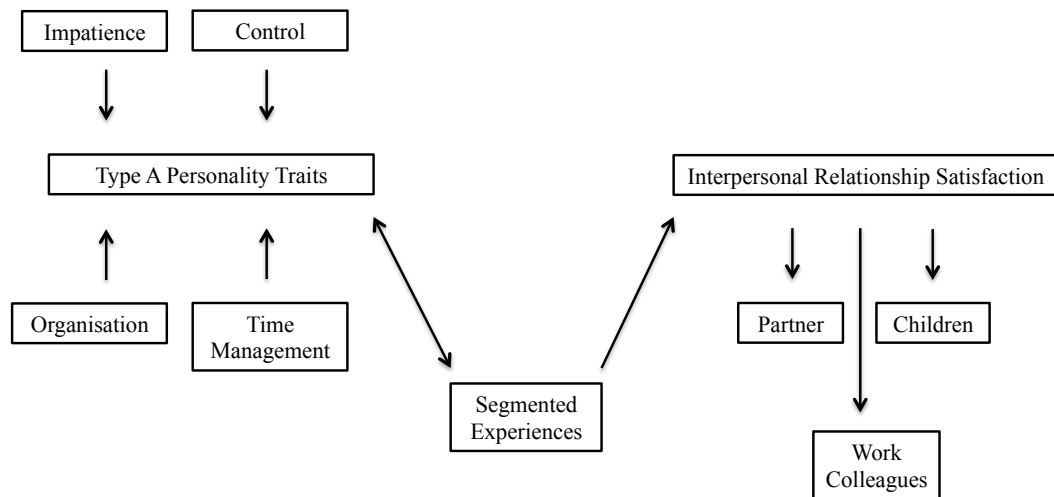
***Segmented Experiences and Interpersonal Relationship Satisfaction:***

Working mothers discussed how compartmentalizing their experiences enabled them to perceive relationship satisfaction with their partner, children and work colleagues. Respondents expressed how separating their multiple roles enabled them to devote more energy and time to their relationships and perceive a higher degree of satisfaction with these individuals. This association is described in Table 19 and Figure 7.

Table 19

*Selected Quotes of Relationship Satisfaction elicited by Segmented Experiences*

Relationship Satisfaction with Partner	“I am very proud to be able to almost always switch off from work at home... It is very much apart of my identity that I can remove myself from work. I only go to work basically so I can have a home life and that is very important to me. I think that definitely helps my relationship with my son and partner.”
Relationship Satisfaction with Children	“So just being able to bracket a bit more and pick my time when I do need to do some work or negotiating some time to do the things that they (children) want. So I am just trying to be a little more insightful. I think that definitely helps with staying positive with my kids”
Relationship Satisfaction with Work-colleagues	“I guess in saying that I do try to leave those things at home. So if I have been crabby at my son then when you get to work, you walk through the door and this is a new environment so you can move on with the day. I think then that helps you not take your frustration out on others like work colleagues.”



*Figure 7.* A model summarizing the association between working mother's Type A personality traits, segmented experiences and their interpersonal relationship satisfaction

### **Association Three: Workplace, Family, Social and Personal Domains**

Many working mothers discussed how the nature of their cumulative, compensatory or segmented outcomes were mediated by their experiences across workplace, family, social and personal roles.

**Workplace Roles:** Working mothers explained how diverse workplace factors could influence the cumulative, compensatory and segmented nature of their experiences. The workplace factors that working mothers perceived to influence these experiences included:

1. The managerial style
2. Work colleagues
3. The workplace context

***The managerial style:*** Respondents discussed how autocratic managers (i.e. manager who have authority and control over decision making) or democratic managers (i.e. managers who involve employees in decision-making) influenced the nature of their workplace environment and their cumulative and compensatory experiences.

***Autocratic managers:*** Working mothers explained how their cumulative-negative experiences were elicited by autocratic managers. Respondents expressed how autocratic managers were less likely to understand the difficulties in participating in multiple roles. As a consequence, respondents discussed how this often resulted in the accumulation of multiple roles and thus distress and strain. This relationship is demonstrated in Table 20 and Figure 8.

Table 20

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Autocratic Managers*

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Cumulative-Negative Experiences	<p>“I: Okay, would you say your boss was supportive when you had to call in sick?  P: No not really. There was a certain vibe you could definitely pick up, not that he would say anything directly. I think he is just very strict and doesn't understand you can't palm your child off to someone else when they are sick. I mean this just causes me to feel guilty so I go to work, leaving my sick child with someone else. It's very stressful trying to find someone to look after him and I do resent my boss for making me feel like that. I think if he were more understanding about juggling multiple roles it would reduce a lot of unnecessary stress in my life.”</p> <p>“I often feel like my boss doesn't understand the difficulties in juggling multiple roles. I think it's his way or the high-way. I think because of that things do start to build up and that's when I find negative outcomes occur.”</p>
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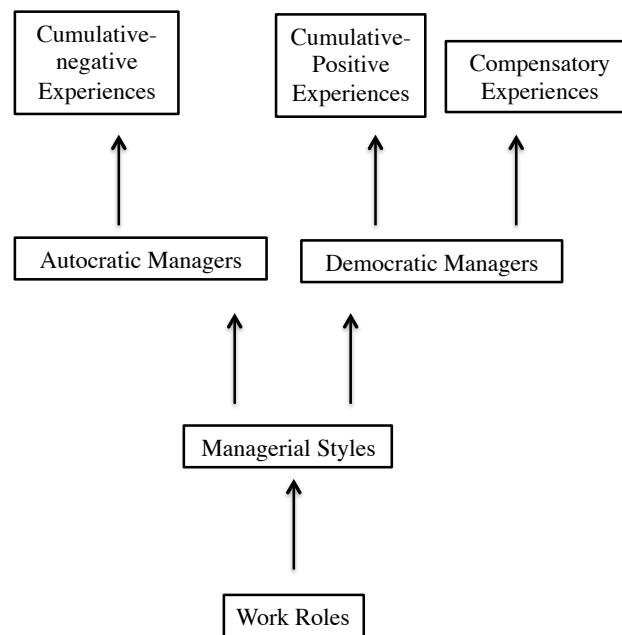


*Democratic Managers:* Respondents discussed how democratic managers enabled them to perceive cumulative-positive and compensatory experiences. Respondents expressed how managers of a democratic nature enabled them to feel valued, supported, trusted and autonomous, which in turn, enabled them to experience a positive workplace environment. In some situations, working mothers explained how this positive environment enabled them to compensate for negative roles across other realms of life. Further, working mothers discussed how a democratic manager enabled cumulative demands to be an enriching experience. These associations are illustrated in Table 21 and Figure 8.

Table 21

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Democratic Managers*

Cumulative-positive Experiences	“One of my managers I can tell really values me and I know that because she writes emails telling me that and it just makes me want to work harder and better for her. The same with my other lady manager; she often says oh we are so lucky to have you on board. Then my other manager is different, he has a different manner about him but he allows quite a lot of freedom. For instance, if you have an area of interest then you can peruse it. So it’s really nice to have that level of autonomy and trust... I just feel as though I am more willing to work through a very stressful workload when I receive that level of respect.”
Compensatory Experiences	“The management here goes beyond academic support; its pastoral care there is a sense of collegiality. I also feel as though my well-being is important to them. So for instance when my step father passed away she just said go; go work at home if you are up to it but this isn’t leave, this isn’t formal, just go and do what you have to do. So that’s pretty amazing, there is a lot of trust and respect there which definitely helps me to I suppose reduce others areas in my life that are negative at the moment.”



*Figure 8.* A model depicting the association between autocratic and democratic managers and working mothers' cumulative and compensatory experiences

**Work Colleagues:** Working mothers discussed how their work colleagues influenced the nature of their multifaceted workplace experiences. In particular, respondents explained how competitiveness, reciprocal altruism (i.e. when an individual makes sacrifices for another individual in the expectation of similar treatment in the future) and appreciation from their work colleagues resulted in cumulative-positive, cumulative-negative and compensatory outcomes.

**Competitiveness:** Respondents explained how competitiveness between themselves and their work colleagues resulted in cumulative-negative experiences. For instance, respondents discussed how this sense of competitiveness caused them to increase their workload and experience an accumulation of negative demands and strain. This relationship is demonstrated in Table 22 and Figure 9.

Table 22

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Work Colleague Competitiveness*


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Cumulative – Negative Experiences	“I do feel a sense of competitiveness here. I’m not sure whether that is driven by your clientele, the expectation that comes with being at an organisation like this is perhaps clients demand more and then that pressure comes down the line so that each other as colleagues feel as though they have to compete rather than work cohesively together... So if I am at home I will constantly be working so that I can try to compete, but this just leads to me becoming run down.”
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*Reciprocal altruism:* Working mothers expressed how reciprocal altruism enabled them to experience cumulative-positive outcomes. Respondents discussed how multiple demands resulted in a positive experience when work colleagues offered their assistance with work demands. The nature of these experiences is represented in Table 23 and figure 9.

Table 23

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Work- Colleagues Reciprocal Altruism*


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Cumulative – Positive Experiences	“I have people at work who I work alongside so if I need to go somewhere they are happy enough to do something for me. That’s not a problem as long as we all help.”
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*Appreciation:* Participant’s discussed how appreciation from their work-colleagues enabled them to experience cumulative-positive outcomes. For instance, respondents discussed how their work colleague’s appreciation enabled them to feel valued, trusted and autonomous when they completed multiple demands. This relationship is demonstrated in Table 24 and Figure 9.

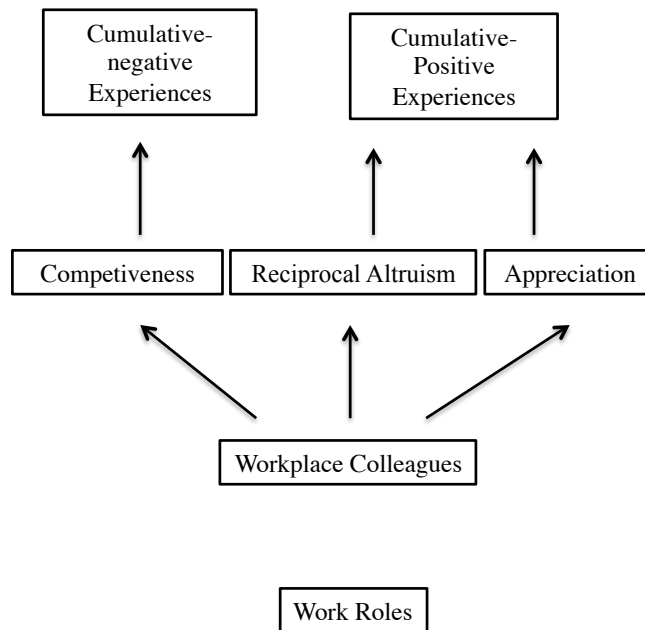
Table 24

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Work-Colleague Appreciation*


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Cumulative – Positive Experiences	“I think the more positive reinforcement I get from my work colleagues the more I am willing to work. I mean if some appreciates the work I am doing then I am more willing to take on more work because I know I will feel good if I am given that praise.”
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*Figure 9.* A model depicting the association between competitiveness, reciprocal altruism and appreciation from work colleagues and working mothers' cumulative experiences

**Work Context:** Working mothers discussed how the nature of their multifaceted experiences was influenced by their workplace context. In particular, respondents perceived that the uncertainty of their job, the family friendly nature of the workplace and the degree of male dominance in the work environment enabled them to experience cumulative and compensatory outcomes.

*Job uncertainty:* Working mothers discussed how their job uncertainty resulted in an accumulation of negative workplace experiences. Respondents perceived that in order to secure their job position they were required to increase their workload, however, as they attempted to do so they were more likely to experience strain and stress from an accumulation of workplace demands. These experiences are described in Table 25 and Figure 10.

Table 25

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Job Uncertainty*

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Cumulative-Negative Experiences	“Well I suppose a negative is for the last 3 and a half years I have had 12 and 6 months short-term contracts so I always feel the need to over-perform at work or I feel the need to continue to perform at a really high level in order to get a contract. So it generally means that you are not saying no to work and you are always saying yes which leads to high overload and for me, often highly negative outcomes. So I guess that is why I work a lot more hours than perhaps I am paid for.”
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*Family Friendly Workplace:* Respondents discussed how a family friendly workplace enabled them to experience cumulative-negative, cumulative-positive and compensatory outcomes. In particular, a workplace that enabled working mothers to fulfill other roles during work hours resulted in an increase in work demands in the home environment. This spillover effect resulted in a perception of strain and thus negative outcomes. Yet, working mothers also expressed how a family friendly environment enabled multiple demands to result in a positive outcome as they were able to perceive flexibility and a degree of autonomy within their workplace responsibilities. Further, working mothers discussed how a family friendly environment enabled them to compensate for negative experiences with their workplace role. These relationships are represented in Table 26 and Figure 10.

Table 26

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by a Family Friendly Workplace*


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Cumulative-Negative Experiences	“With the flexibility it means you have to do that work at home sometimes which can encroach on home life. The difference is when you have those rigid jobs where you are there for 8 hours from then until then, you generally don’t take work home with you.”
Cumulative-Positive Experiences	“Well the position I am in at the moment is all school-based hours so that is wonderful with having all three children at school. I have weekends off and school holidays off so that is great. My day starts at 8:30 and finishes at 3, sometimes I am there later but not very late. The other great thing is I can be involved in their activities and they don’t have to go to after school care.”
Compensatory Experiences	“Well the best thing about being an academic is it is flexible. Unless you have classroom time you can kind of do what you need to do. So sometimes I have shorter days because the kids need to be places or you need to do things, which means you have to make up for it in the evening.”

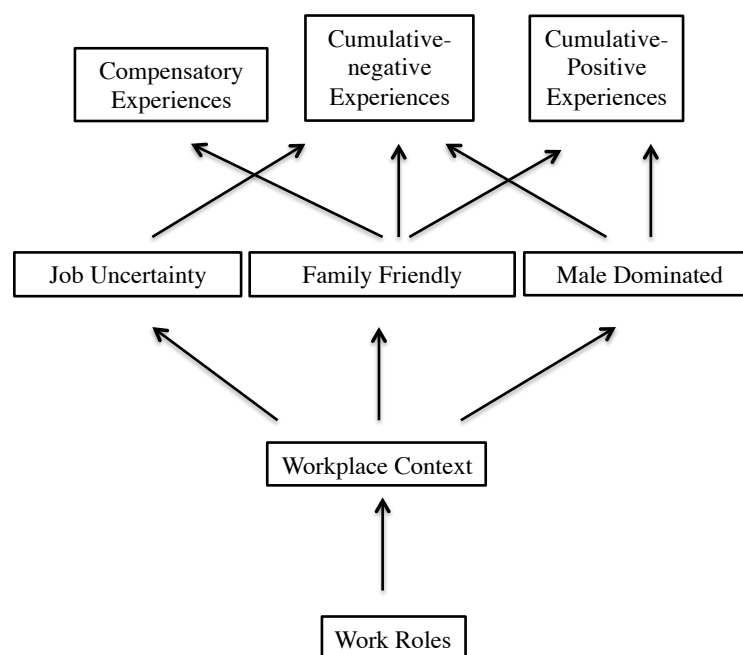
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*Male Dominated Environment:* Working mothers further expressed how participating in a male dominated area created cumulative-negative and cumulative-positive outcomes. For instance, working mothers became frustrated and felt unsupported when working in a male dominated area, which increased strain within the workplace and hence resulted in cumulative-negative outcomes. However, working mothers also discussed that a male dominated workplace could enable them to experience positive outcomes from the accumulation of multiple roles within their work environment. These relationships are represented in Table 27 and Figure 10.

Table 27

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by a Male Dominated Workplace*

Cumulative-Negative Experiences	“Well if my child is sick, someone will say something, not in a negative way, but they will just say “oh was your child sick”. I just sometimes feel as though I get a negative reaction. Whereas, when I worked with women they were a little bit more understanding. Like they would say “oh how is he, is he alright?”. I think maybe that causes things within my work role to become frustrating. It just sits in the back of your mind and build on top of those little problems to sometimes create a larger problem.”
Cumulative-Positive Experiences	“So it’s a male dominated area and I love it like that. I just feel there is no gossiping... I can just come in and do my work and, if anything, I laugh with the guys. I suppose I don’t feel any different to them. They just treat me as a boy. I think then if things start to get stressful we all just have a laugh and get on with it ”



*Figure 10.* A model depicting the association between job uncertainty, a family friendly workplace and a male dominated workplace and working mothers’ cumulative and compensatory experiences.

**Family Roles:** Many mothers discussed that their family environment influenced the cumulative, compensatory or segmented nature of their experiences. The factors that were depicted to influence the nature of working mother's family roles included:

1. Age of children
2. Domestic responsibility

***Age of Children:*** Respondents discussed how the age of their children created cumulative-negative and cumulative-positive outcomes. Respondents identified that as their children become more independent (i.e. older) they were more likely to understand their reason for participating in multiple environments and evidently resulted in cumulative-positive experiences. However, as children became older working mothers also discussed how they were likely to participate in more roles, which caused multiple demands within the home environment to accumulate and result in negative outcomes. Cumulative-negative outcomes were also evident when working mothers had young children and were attempting to participate in multiple roles. Table 28 and figure 11 demonstrate these relationships.



Table 28

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by the Age of Working Mother's Children*


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Cumulative-negative	<p>“I think working while my son is little is not ideal because it does create a lot of stress. I do sometimes struggle with these demands piling up... It is very hard with a young son.”</p> <p>“So I find that probably the family things suffer the most as they get older because we always used to put family first but now that the kids are a bit more flexible I find that I can work a little bit more.”</p>
Cumulative - positive Experiences	<p>“I’m lucky cause my kids are older, it allows me to juggle work and home life more easily...I suppose the kids understand that I need to work and balance home life. I think they understand that doing both work and family roles makes me happy. They also know that when I do I don’t take things out on them as much.”</p>

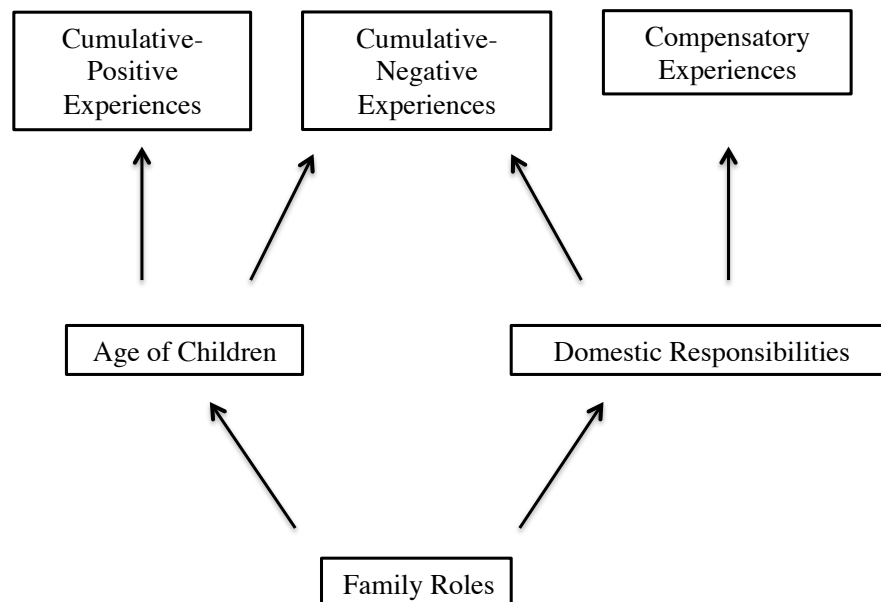
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***Domestic Responsibilities:*** Working mothers expressed that their domestic responsibilities were likely to result in cumulative-negative and compensatory experiences. For instance, working mothers perceived that as their domestic responsibilities accumulated they were more likely to experience negative outcomes within the family environment. Alternatively, working mothers who experienced a shared sense of domestic responsibility with their partner were more likely to experience compensatory outcomes. These experiences are represented in Table 29 and Figure 11.

Table 29

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Domestic Responsibilities*

Cumulative-negative Experiences	“I think because I take on the main share of household duties I am more likely to become stressed because things tend to build up more. I suppose in order to maintain them I have to reduce the things I like such as work and my volunteer position.”
Compensatory Experiences	“So we basically care for our children equally, so in his work he is also able to care for them when I’m not caring for them... I feel as though the role for parenting doesn’t fall too heavily on either one of us; it is a pretty good balance. So if I am under the pump at work he will be there which is just great. It greatly reduces my stress levels”



*Figure 11.* A model depicting the association between the age of working mother’s children and domestic responsibilities and their cumulative and compensatory experiences

**Social Roles:** Working mothers discussed how their social roles influenced their cumulative, compensatory and segmented experiences. The social roles working mothers discussed involved socialisation with their:

1. Friends
2. Family
3. Other parents

**Friends:** Working mothers discussed how socialisation with friends enabled them to form support networks and experience compensatory and segmented outcomes. Respondents discussed how socialisation with their friends enabled them to compensate for negative experiences or distinguish between their multiple roles. They further discussed how socialisation with their friends lead to cumulative demands that could result in distress. These relationships are represented in Table 30 and Figure 12.

Table 30

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Socialisation with Friends*

Cumulative-Negative Experiences	“I think I am really lucky because I have lots of friends living in ‘city’ who have come to live back here. I think sometimes this can create negative issues though because I feel as though I always have to spend time with them and I just don’t have the time. Sometimes that can create stress for sure.”
Compensatory Experiences	“I had a couple of close girlfriends who I will talk to a lot about things, so that is great for support. It helps to talk about it so I don’t bring it here (work) or vice versa.”
Segmented Experiences	“I think spending time with my friends just allows me to distance myself from all of my other roles. It’s a nice way to clear my thoughts and just reflecting to make sure I am present or centred in each role. So in a way that is a form of social interaction and support for me.”

**Family:** Participants further discussed how socialisation with their family enabled them to compensate for negative experiences or demands in other realms of their life. Working mothers perceived that their immediate and extended family enabled them to reduce the impact of negative experiences in workplace and home environments. This relationship is demonstrated in Table 31 and Figure 12.

Table 31

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Socialisation with Family*

Compensatory Experiences	“At the moment they (parents) cook us dinner one night a week and we just pick it up and take it home, which is a big thing when your working as its nice to have dinner done and ready to go. They are also good in terms of looking after my daughter when my daughter is sick and I have had to come in for a meeting.”
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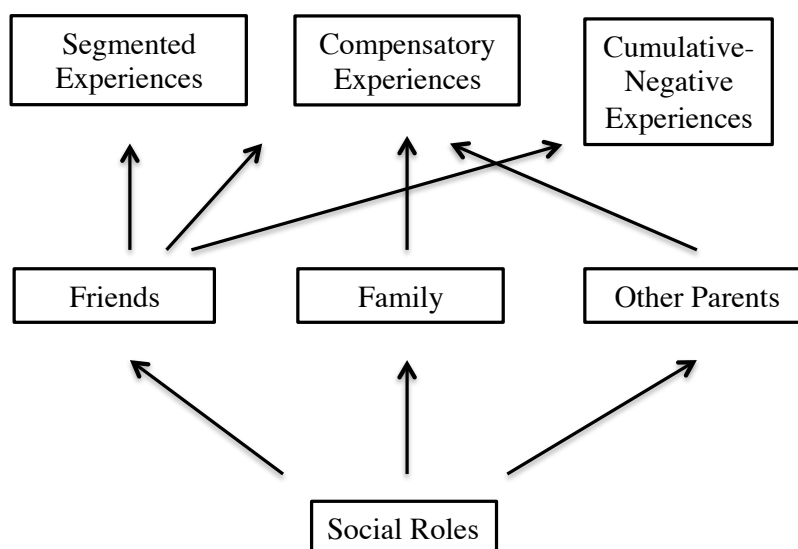
**Other Parents:** Working mothers explained how socialisation with other parents within their workplace, sporting group or friendship group enabled them to experience compensatory outcomes. Respondents expressed how this form of socialisation enabled them to develop support networks which evidently enabled them to reduce the impact of negative experiences or demands. Working mothers discussed how these support networks were utilised in a variety of situations within the workplace and home domain. The nature of these experiences is discussed in Table 32 and Figure 12.

Table 32

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Socialisation with Other Parents*Compensatory  
Experiences

“When I was working part-time I was able to meet some of the other parents who were in the same situation and we became very close and the kids did as well... I think that enabled us to take some time in our busy schedule to vent which was very positive for us all.”

“Also friends who can help you out with travelling when flexibility is needed. There is a friend that lives down the road so if I am running late I ask her can you pick up the boys from footy training or whatever and I’ll do the same for her another time.”



*Figure 12.* A model depicting the association between working mother’s socialisation with friends, family and other parents and their cumulative, compensatory and segmented outcomes

**Personal Roles:** In addition to work, family and social roles, working mothers expressed how their personal roles influenced the cumulative, compensatory of segmented nature of their experiences. Personal roles were those which working mothers participated in for their personal satisfaction and/or self-worth. Personal roles working mothers discussed included:

1. Exercise
2. Mindfulness
3. Volunteering

**Exercise:** Many working mothers discussed how exercise enabled them to experience cumulative, compensatory and segmented outcomes. For instance, working mothers discussed how exercise enabled them to compensate for negative experiences. Further, exercise enabled working mothers to emotionally separate their experiences across multiple domains. These experiences are demonstrated in Table 33 and Figure 13.

Table 33  
*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Exercise*

Compensatory Experiences	“Netball is also good because I’m not thinking about anything else at that time so it just gives me a break from thinking about problems at work or it is good to release some energy when I am mad with my husband or other people.”
Segmented Experiences	“It (exercise) allows me just to have some time to myself really and zone out from all of the issues at work and at home.”

**Mindfulness:** Participants discussed how engaging in mindfulness (i.e. a mental state achieved by focusing on the present moment) enabled them to separate roles across multiple environments. Respondents discussed how taking time to reflect mentally on multiple experiences resulted in segmented outcomes. This

interaction is depicted in table 34 and Figure 13.

Table 34

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Mindfulness*

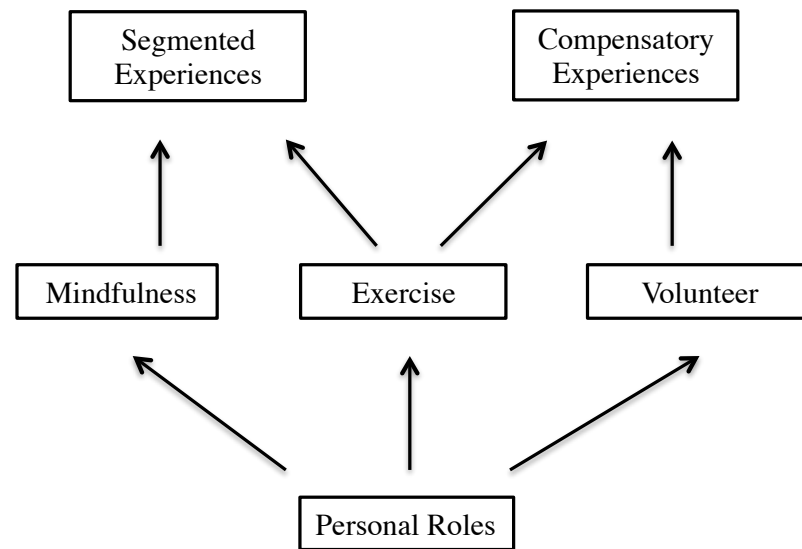
Segmented Experiences	“Sometimes I will do some mindfulness... I am finding this helps with letting things go and keeping my mind present in the current situation. So that is good because it helps me stay concentrated on work if I am at work and home if I am home.”
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**Volunteering:** Respondents further discussed how volunteering enabled them to compensate for negative experiences. These experiences are demonstrated in Table 35 and Figure 13.

Table 35

*Selected Quotes of Experiences elicited by Volunteer Positions*

Compensatory Experiences	“Um so I guess the volunteer work is kind of my area so I think that is a positive as I can just focus on the charity I am supporting. So I guess they are the things I do for myself because I don’t have any time to do any sport or things like that... So my volunteer role has always been my area and something I can control or how I escape from the real world..”
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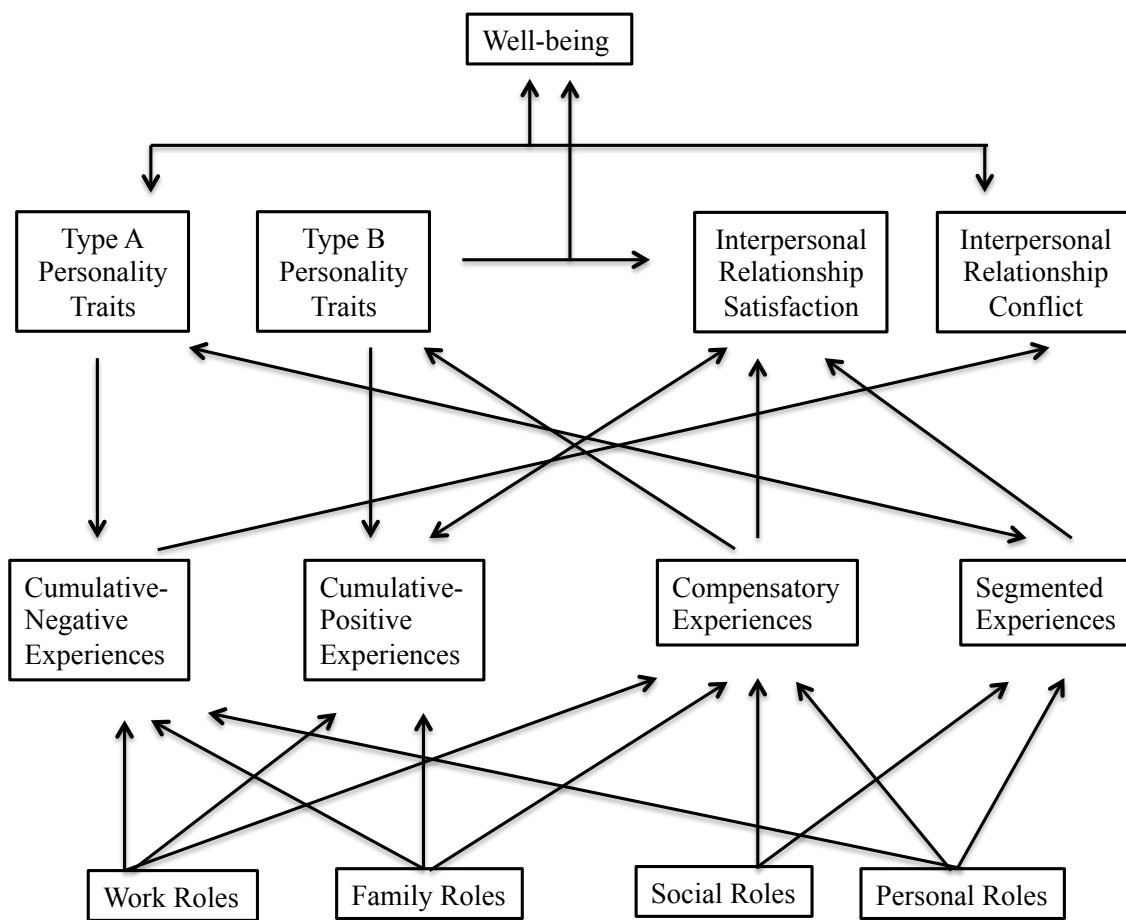


*Figure 13.* A model depicting the association between exercise, mindfulness and volunteer roles and working mother’s cumulative, compensatory and segmented outcomes

### **Summary of Results**

Figure 14 provides a detailed representation of the current findings and demonstrates the links between each major construct and interaction.





*Figure. 14.* A model depicting a detailed representation of the major themes and interactions contributing to working mother's well-being.

### **Inter-Rater Reliability**

To assess the inter-rater reliability of this model an independent rater with experience in thematic analysis coded one page of each interview transcript. By utilising N-Vivo-10, their codes were compared to the researchers codes using Cohen's Kappa; a chance adjusted measure of agreement between two raters (Ladis & Koch, 1977). A substantial inter-rater reliability ( $K = .61$ ) indicates the current results are reliable (Ladis & Koch, 1977).

## **Discussion**

The present study has identified that working mother's well-being is influenced by an association between their Type A or Type B personality characteristics and interpersonal relationship conflict or satisfaction. The current findings further imply that these constructs mediate, or are mediated by, the cumulative, compensatory or segmented nature of working mothers' experiences within their work, home, social and personal domains. The results will now be discussed at each level of the analysis to provide a detailed description of the multifaceted nature of working mothers' lived experiences and how these domains interact to cohesively influence their well-being.

### **Personality Characteristics and Interpersonal Relationship Quality**

The identified association between working mother's personality characteristics and relationship quality can be explained through Sullivan's (1953) Interpersonal theory. This theory postulates that social interactions and interpersonal relations are the basis for an individual's personality. Sullivan (1954; 1956) asserts it is essential to examine how an individual interacts with other humans in order to clarify their underlying disposition and temperament. Despite these claims, very little research has examined interpersonal theory from a working mother's perspective and how the association between personality and interpersonal relationship quality influences their psychological well-being (Markiewicz, Doyle, Brendgen, 2001; Smith & Handson, 1975). As such, the current study extends existing literature by examining facets of interpersonal theory in relation to working mother's well-being.

The current results further extend Sullivan's interpersonal theory (1953) by precisely identifying that working mother's interpersonal relationship conflict elicits

Type A related personality characteristics (i.e. anxiety, control, organisation, impatience and high achievement orientated) and together these constructs function to reduce working mother's well-being. This potentially occurs as relationship conflict typically results in strain (Yu et al., 2014), which in turn elicits additional Type A personality traits and a reduction in of well-being (Orpen, 1987). These findings thus provide specific directions for Sullivan's interpersonal theory (1953) in conceptualizing working mother's well-being.

The present study further extends Sullivan's (1953) claims by acknowledging the bi-directional nature of personality and interpersonal interactions in relation to well-being. This was represented by results indicating that working mothers with typically Type A personality traits were likely to perceive interpersonal relationship conflict and a lower sense of well-being. This is consistent with prior literature indicating individuals with a high degree of control and achievement orientation are likely to perceive marital dissatisfaction (Robins, Avshalom & Moffit, 2000) and experience higher strain and stress related symptoms (Dearborn & Hastings, 1987). One potential reason for this finding is that individuals with Type A associated personality traits are likely to perceive hostility and/or aggression, which can often lead to an expression of anger and a lack of compassion to others (Orpen, 1987). As a consequence, working mothers may gradually experience strain and conflict with their social counterparts, which can over time have a negative effect on their well-being (Yu et al., 2014).

Conversely, the present study indicates that working mothers were likely to perceive a high degree of psychological well-being from relationship satisfaction when they possessed Type B related personality traits (i.e. patience, organisation and a lack of urgency). Again, this demonstrates the bidirectional nature of Sullivan's

interpersonal theory (1953) and provides further support for existing literature signifying relationship satisfaction as a pre-determinant of psychological well-being (Robins et al., 2000). These results potentially occur as individuals with Type B associated personalities are likely to act in accordance with their valued social counterparts and thus perceive high relationship satisfaction (Spence, Helmreich, & Pred, 1987). As a result, working mothers in cohesive relationships may perceive a lower degree of conflict, which can reduce adverse physical health symptoms and thus result in high well-being (Yu et al., 2014).

Together these findings highlight the importance of integrating research on working mothers Type A and Type B personality characteristics with literature on relationship quality and satisfaction. These results further provide support for each the nature and nurture debate by contending that the environment (e.g. relationship quality) may influence personality (i.e. nurture debate) yet personality may also influence the environment (i.e. nature debate) (Collins et al., 2000). These findings further suggest that current theories incorporating elements of personality and relationships (e.g. Sullivan's (1953) interpersonal theory) should be extended to examine the bi-directionality of these concepts and associated interdependencies in conceptualizing working mother's well-being. Within this conceptualization, the current results also emphasise the importance of examining dispositional characteristics and relationship quality within the context of working mothers' multiple experiences.

### **Multiple Experiences: Cumulative, Compensatory and Segmented Outcomes**

Consistent with prior literature (e.g. Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Lambert, 1990) the current results indicate that positive and negative experiences across

multiple domains combine to create cumulative, compensatory or segmented outcomes. This potentially occurs as the nature of working mothers' multifaceted experiences creates subjective perceptions that can evidently result in various outcomes. The present study further contends that these outcomes influence, or are influenced by working mothers' personality characteristics and interpersonal relationship quality.

Specifically, the present study indicates that working mothers' Type A related personality characteristics are likely to create cumulative-negative experiences, which in turn, elicits interpersonal relationship conflict. This result is consistent with prior research indicating individuals with Type A personality experience a high degree of strain from participating in multi-tasking as they are likely to perceive a degree of conflict between multiple demands and/or an overload from participating in multiple roles (Dearborn & Hastings, 1987). In line with self-regulation and self-control literature it is possible that this association will result in relationship conflict as a consistently high degree of strain will reduce working mother's self-regulatory capacity to maintain interpersonal relationships (Helblurn & Friedberg, 1988).

In contrast to these findings, the current study indicates that working mothers with Type B personality characteristics are likely to experience cumulative-positive outcomes, which in turn, elicits, or are elicited by relationship satisfaction. This potentially occurs as working mothers with Type B personality dispositions are likely to interpret their participation in multiple roles as an enriching experience that leads to growth and facilitation of well-being (Booth-Kewleey & Friedman, 1988). As a result, working mothers may perceive less conflict with their social counterparts while participating in multiple domains (Carlson, 1999). These findings thus

contribute to the salutogenic perspective (Antonovsky, 1979) by suggesting that relationship satisfaction and Type B personality are possible mechanisms underlying working mother's perception of positive experiences. This is consistent with research indicating accumulated experiences predominately result in positive and adaptive outcomes when a high degree of relationship quality is present (Erdwins et al., 2001).

The current results further indicate that relationship satisfaction may occur as a result of compensatory experiences elicited by Type B related personality traits. This potentially occurs as individuals with Type B personality are likely to have mechanisms to deal with stress and competitiveness (Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1988) which can be used in attaining positive self-appraisals (Grassberger, 1986). In line with self-complexity theory (Linville, 1987), positive self-appraisals may then be utilised to compensate for negative-self perceptions in order to attain a positive existence – in this case relationship satisfaction. This finding is in agreement with prior research indicating individuals are 36% less likely to perceive relationship strain if they participate in an activity that increases positive self-perceptions (Carlson et al., 2004).

In addition to the cumulative and compensatory nature of working mother's experiences, the current study further contends that working mothers' segmented experiences create relationship satisfaction and influence, or are influenced by their Type A personality characteristics. This is inconsistent with previous findings indicating Type A related personality traits are associated with relationship conflict and Type B related personality traits are associated with relationship satisfaction. One potential reason for this finding is that individuals with Type A personality traits are more likely to control and organise their roles (Spence et al., 1987), hence enabling them to separate their multiple experiences. As a consequence, working

mothers will be able to divide more attention to those within each domain and thus, experience relationship satisfaction (Rothbard, Philips & Dumas, 2005). This is consistent with research indicating individuals who perceive segmented experiences are likely to maintain high relationship satisfaction with their social counterparts (Finkenauer, 2004).

Together these findings highlight the importance of integrating research on cumulative, compensatory and segmented outcomes with literature on working mothers' dispositional characteristics and interpersonal relationship quality. The current study has identified that studying these constructs enables a comprehensive conceptualization of working mother's lived experiences and their psychological well-being. Within this conceptualization, the current study further highlights the importance of examining the influence of these outcomes across multiple domains.

### **Multiple Domains: Workplace, Family, Social and Personal Roles**

The present study indicates that working mothers' cumulative, compensatory and segmented outcomes are informed by their experiences within workplace, family, social and personal roles. Consistent with Guket and colleagues (1981) argument, it is therefore essential to observe the interacting nature of working mothers' experiences across a variety of roles in order to gain a comprehensive insight into their lived experiences.

In the current study, the multifaceted nature of working mother's workplace role was seen to create cumulative and compensatory experiences. The relation between a family friendly workplace and working mothers' cumulative-negative experiences was particularly surprising given that prior literature has predominately identified a positive relationship between family friendly environments and well-

being (Marshall et al., 1994). This potentially occurs as family friendly environments enable working mothers to attain control and flexibility, which in turn, can cause multiple roles to overlap and evidently result in cumulative-negative demands (Frone et al., 2007). The accumulation of multiple roles also elicited job uncertainty and competitiveness as a result of an increased workload. This is consistent with research indicating individuals with high job complexity are likely to perceive a sense of competitiveness and cumulative strain demands (Frone, Russel & Cooper, 1995).

Cumulative experiences were also elicited by the multifaceted nature of working mothers' family roles. The findings that the age of working mother's children and their level of domestic responsibility created positive and negative experiences is inconsistent with prior literature indicating an evident association between both younger children and high domestic responsibilities and working mothers perception of strain (Douchet, 2006). The current results potentially occur as the context of working mothers domestic responsibilities and experiences with their children influences their perception of the outcome (Douchet, 2006). These findings are thus consistent with Kanner and colleagues (1981) daily hassles and uplift model which implies experiences may potentially result in positive and negative outcomes depending on the nature of the experience.

The nature of working mothers social roles were also identified to create a cumulative, compensatory and segmented experiences. This contradicts existing literature indicating that social connectedness is predominately associated with positive outcomes (Cassel, 1976) to instead suggest there is the potential for social roles to result in negative consequences. This potentially occurs as working mothers with multiple demands may see socialisation as a burden rather than as assistance. Despite these claims, working mothers were also likely to perceive compensatory



experiences through socialising with their social counterparts. One potential reason for this outcome is that social connectedness can enable working mothers to discuss and resolve negative experiences (Canary et al., 1993). This is consistent with research indicating socialisation can act as a psychological stress buffer to aid in a reduction of negative experiences (Cobb, 1976).

Compensatory and segmented experiences were also associated with roles that working mother perceived to be personal (i.e. exercise, mindfulness and volunteering). This consistent with existing research indicating working mothers who participate in personally fulfilling roles are 21% more likely to have a higher level of satisfaction (Burke & Weir, 1979; Wilson, 2006). The current results imply that this may potentially occur as working mothers are able to separate themselves from other domains and/or reduce the impact of negative experiences.

Together, the current findings highlight the importance of examining the context in which working mothers perceive multidimensional roles in comprehensively understanding the multifaceted nature of their lived experiences. This extends existing literature examining the interference between working mother's family and home domain by suggesting their experiences are multifaceted and occur across a wide array of domains. The current study thus proposes that in order to examine the nature of working mother's experiences it is essential to examine the context and perception of their experiences.

### **Application of Self-Complexity theory**

Consistent with Linville's (1987) self-complexity theory, the results indicate that high self-affectivity (i.e. multiple roles) can enable working mothers to experience positive outcomes. Therefore, the current study supports Linville's (1987)

view that high self-complexity enables an individual to utilise high self-esteem in one domain in order to reduce the impact of low self-esteem in another domain. The results further provided support for Linville's (1987) claim that an individual may actively prevent the mental spillover between multiple domains by attaining multiple sub-selves. However, the present findings also provide support for Solomon and Haaga's (2003) view by indicating high self-complexity can accumulate to produce positive or negative experiences. The current study posits that these discrepancies occur as the context and perception of working mother's experiences evidently influence the nature of their outcomes. These findings thus highlight the importance of examining working mother's interpretation of multiple experiences and the interaction between these perceptions in attempting to examine how self-complexity theory applies to their psychological experience.

### **Implications**

There are both theoretical and practical implications for the current findings. Theoretically, the study highlights the need to incorporate diverse theoretical perspectives on the nature of positive and negative experiences (Hart & Cooper, 2001; Kanner et al., 1981; Antonvsky, 1979) across multiple domains (Gutek et al., 1981; Hart et al., 1993) with theories on cumulative (Coverman, 1989), compensatory (Siber, 1974) and segmented (Staines, 1980) experiences in order to develop a comprehensive conceptualization of working mother's well-being. The results further highlight the novel and important finding of needing to integrate these perspectives with working mother's perception of their personal dispositional characteristics and interpersonal relationship quality to build a comprehensive theory of working mother's well-being.

Practically, the current study suggests that in designing interventions it is firstly imperative to understand the nature of working mother's cumulative, compensatory and segmented experiences across multiple domains. The context of these experiences can then be utilised to implement interventions surrounding working mother's relationship quality and disposition in order to improve their overall sense of well-being. This highlights the need for clinicians to individualise interventions to improve working mother's well-being.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

While this study has some important strengths, it does not lack limitations. As thematic analysis requires the researcher to make informed decisions regarding the importance of the themes, the current results only provide one potential representation of the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). While substantial inter-rater reliability was identified, successful replication of the current themes and representations is virtually impossible given that qualitative analysis is an inductive approach that requires immersion within the interview process and data set.

The current results were also limited by the high proportion (89%) of participants with post-secondary education. Although the researcher attempted to avoid this constraint by recruiting working mother's from diverse work contexts, the relatively high proportion of working mother's willing to participate from a university domain evidently limited this intention. However, it is also possible that this constraint reflects the current increase in working mothers attaining higher education (Australian Bureau of statistics, 2015). Despite claims, future research should attempt to validate the present results in a sample of working mother's with a wide range of education levels and socio-economic statuses. Due to the time

constraints of this study the researcher was evidently unable to achieve this aim.

The time constraints also limited the researcher to solely utilising using a qualitative design. If time permitted, the researcher may have been able to conduct a triangulation of methods including a quantitative component in the research. Therefore, although the proposed model in the present study has been conducted using a robust, valid process of analysis, the researcher has been unable to empirically evaluate the results. This limitations lead to a future direction of this research – development of a reliable and valid model and measure to evaluate working mother's well-being. This may potentially occur through integration of current scales commonly utilised to assess an individual's well-being. Specific scales that may be incorporated include the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (Saville & Holdsworth, 1999); Orientation to Life Questionnaire (Antonovsky, 1987) and Coping Orientations to the Problems Experienced Questionnaire (Carver, Scheier & Weintrauh, 1989). In developing this measure, the incorporation of individual's cumulative, compensatory and segmented experiences should occur as the current study has indicated these are influential moderating factors of working mother's well-being.

Future research may also examine similar experiences from a father's perspective and examine how these findings compare to working mother's experiences. In conducting this research it may be also beneficial to adopt a longitudinal design in order to assess the multifaceted nature of personality and how various developmental life stages can influence working mothers and fathers experience of psychological well-being.

## **Conclusion**

Through an iterative qualitative process of analysis the current study has highlighted the need to examine the association between working mothers personality characteristics and interpersonal relationship quality in order to comprehensively conceptualise their well-being. This study further contends the complexity of these constructs are best understood by examining the cumulative, compensatory and segmented nature of working mother's experiences across work, family, social and personal roles. Together, these findings highlight the need to incorporate multiple theoretical perspectives in order to assess and facilitate working mother's psychological well-being.

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## Appendix A

### University of Tasmania Ethics Approval

Social Science Ethics Officer  
Private Bag 01 Hobart  
Tasmania 7001 Australia  
Tel: (03) 6226 2763  
Fax: (03) 6226 7148  
Katherine.Shaw@utas.edu.au




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HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (TASMANIA) NETWORK

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01 May 2015

Professor Douglas Paton  
Psychology  
Private Bag 1342  
University of Tasmania

Dear Professor Paton

Re: MINIMAL RISK ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL

Ethics Ref: H0014857 - Cumulative and Compensatory Influences on Psychological Well-being in Working Mothers: An Exploratory Investigation into Experiences Across Multiple Domains

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We are pleased to advise that acting on a mandate from the Tasmania Social Sciences HREC, the Chair of the committee considered and approved the above project on 16 April 2015.

This approval constitutes ethical clearance by the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. The decision and authority to commence the associated research may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process. For example, your research may need ethics clearance from other organisations or review by your research governance coordinator or Head of Department. It is your responsibility to find out if the approval of other bodies or authorities is required. It is recommended that the proposed research should not commence until you have satisfied these requirements.

Please note that this approval is for four years and is conditional upon receipt of an annual Progress Report. Ethics approval for this project will lapse if a Progress Report is not submitted.

The following conditions apply to this approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval.

1. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval, to ensure the project is conducted as approved by the Ethics Committee, and to notify the Committee if any investigators are added to, or cease involvement with, the project.
2. Complaints: If any complaints are received or ethical issues arise during the course of the project, investigators should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 03 6226 7479 or [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au).



3. Incidents or adverse effects: Investigators should notify the Ethics Committee immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
4. Amendments to Project: Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval is obtained from the Ethics Committee. Please submit an Amendment Form (available on our website) to notify the Ethics Committee of the proposed modifications.
5. Annual Report: Continued approval for this project is dependent on the submission of a Progress Report by the anniversary date of your approval. You will be sent a courtesy reminder closer to this date. **Failure to submit a Progress Report will mean that ethics approval for this project will lapse.**
6. Final Report: A Final Report and a copy of any published material arising from the project, either in full or abstract, must be provided at the end of the project.

Yours sincerely

on behalf of  
Ethics Officer  
Tasmania Social Sciences HREC

Appendix B  
Recruitment Flyer



**FACULTY OF HEALTH**

**How do experiences in multiple environments influence the psychological well-being in working mothers?**

We would like to invite you to participate in a study to investigate how life experiences across multiple domains (e.g. work, home environments, social contexts etc.) interact to influence the psychological well-being in working mothers.

This research will investigate how your psychological well-being is influenced by the experiences you (and other working mothers) have across multiple contexts. The information obtained from participants will be used to inform the development of well-being strategies for working mothers by exploring how balancing multiple roles contributes to sustained psychological health.

To be eligible for participation the following requirements are essential:

- Hold current employment of at least 25 hours per week
- Be aged between 25-60 years of age and
- Have children under the age of 14 years.

Participation in this study will involve a one hour individual, confidential interview; this may take place in person or over the phone. The time, date and location of interviews will be arranged for a time that suits you.

If you would like to participate in the study or have any questions regarding the study, please contact me by email: [carly.edmunds@utas.edu.au](mailto:carly.edmunds@utas.edu.au).

Thank you for your time

Carly Edmunds  
Student Investigator, School of Psychology,  
University of Tasmania.

## Appendix C

## Participant Information Sheet



FACULTY OF HEALTH

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (PROFORMA)**  
**SOCIAL SCIENCE**  
**RESEARCH**

**Psychological Well-Being in Working Women**

**Invitation**

You are invited to participate in a research study to investigate how life experiences across multiple domains (e.g. work, home environments, social contexts etc.) that comprise our lives interact to influence psychological well-being in working mothers. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of an honours degree for Carly Edmunds, under the supervision of Professor Douglas Paton of the school of Psychology, University of Tasmania, Launceston. The study is entirely independent of your employing organization.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how life experiences across multiple domains (e.g. work, home environments, social contexts etc.) interact to influence psychological well-being in working mothers. This research is being undertaken to clarify conflicting views about factors affecting working mothers' experience of work and non-work roles. While traditional models argue that work and non-work roles adversely affect well-being, other studies of working mothers' experiences in home and work environments (Guttek, 1991; Hart, 1999; Kanner et al., 1980; Kaplan, 1979) suggest that it is important to both differentiate positive and negative experiences across a range of domains (e.g. home and work environments, social contexts) and investigate how these experiences interact to influence well-being. To date, no study has examined how aspects of life experience across multiple domains interact to have cumulative or compensatory influences on psychological well-being in working mothers. This project will use working mothers own accounts of their experiences across multiple domains to identify the cumulative or compensatory interaction on their psychological well-being.

**Why have I been invited to participate in this study?**

You are eligible to participate in this study because you are between 25 and 60 years of age, are an employed mother who works at least 25 hours per week and have children under the age of 14 years. Participants are being recruited from a broad range of industry sectors.

**What does this study involve?**

This study will involve you participating in a 45-60 minute individual, confidential interview. The interview will be semi-structured and will explore your experiences in multiple domains and your views on how these experiences interact to influence your psychological well-being.

You will be provided with a number prior to the interview. This will be used to identify you through the interview. All data linking you to this number will be destroyed after you have been emailed the results of the study. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and your number will be used to identify you. You will be sent a transcript of your interview to check it for accuracy and to make any amendments you see as necessary. With your approval the anonymous transcripts of the interviews will appear in the appendix of the honours thesis.

**Are there any possible benefits from participation in the study?**

No benefits can be guaranteed through your involvement in this study. However, it is possible that participating may enable you to identify personal strengths and strategies across multiple domains and tasks that you might be able to use to facilitate your well-being. At a general level, the results of this study will inform the development of effective strategies that working mothers may be able to use to balance multiple roles and increase their psychological health.

**Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?**

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

**What if I change my mind during or after the Study?**

It is important to understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased and grateful to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. If you decide to discontinue participation at anytime, all interview data (recording and transcript) will be destroyed immediately and no explanation for your decision to withdraw will be required. There will be no consequences to you if you decide to discontinue participation, and this will not affect your current employment position.

**What will happen to the information when this study is over?**

All information will be treated in a confidential manner, and your name will not be used in any data, analyses or publication arising out of the research. All the data (transcript and recordings) will be kept on a password-protected computer or locked filing cabinet (for paper documents) in the school of psychology, UTAS, Launceston. Only the researchers will have access the data. The data will only be used for this research project. All data will be destroyed after five years of the thesis submission.

**How will the results of the study be published?**

Once the information is analysed the summary of the findings will be emailed or mailed to you. The results will be submitted in thesis as apart of the psychology honours course requirements for Carly Edmunds on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015. The thesis will be held in the library at the School of Psychology, UTAS, Launceston. If you wish to obtain a copy of the thesis please contact the researchers after this date.

**What if I have questions about this research?**

If you would like to discuss any aspects of this research please feel free to contact either Professor Douglas Paton on ph 6324 3193 or Carly Edmunds at [carly.edmunds@utas.edu.au](mailto:carly.edmunds@utas.edu.au). You are welcome to contact us at any time to discuss aspects relating to the research study.

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of this study you should contact the Executive Officer the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479 or email [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au). The executive officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. Should you decide to contact the HREC, please quote the HREC project number H14857

**Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.**

**If you are willing to participate in the study, please sign the attached written consent form and send to [carly.edmunds@utas.edu.au](mailto:carly.edmunds@utas.edu.au)**

**This information sheet is for you to keep.**

Appendix D  
Participant Consent form



**FACULTY OF HEALTH**

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:

**Psychological Well-being in Working Mothers**

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1. I agree to take part in this study investigating the psychological well-being in working mothers.
2. I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this project.
3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
4. I understand the study involves a one hour individual, confidential, taped interview, via phone or in-person, to identify the factors that influence my psychological well-being as a working mother.

I consent to having my phone interview recorded Yes ☐ No ☐

I consent to having my in-person interview recorded Yes ☐ No ☐

5. I understand that participation involves me talking about my experiences across multiple environments and discussing how I believe they influence my well-being. I understand that if I feel uncomfortable to comment on any specific issue, I will ask the investigator to move on to a different topic.
6. I understand that I will be given an opportunity to review and amend the transcript of my interview prior to it being analysed.
7. I further understand that this anonymous transcript will be reproduced verbatim in the appendices of the honour's student's thesis if I consent to this.
8. I understand that all research data will be securely stored in the University of Tasmania premises and will be destroyed after five years.
9. Any questions that I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
10. I understand that the researchers will ensure my identity remains confidential and that any information I supply to the researchers will be used only for the purpose of this research.
11. I agree that research data gathered from me for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as the participant.
12. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at anytime, without any effect, and if so I wish, I may request that any data I have supplied to be withdrawn from the research.

Participant's name:

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Participant's signature:

Date:

---

**Statement by Investigator**

☐

I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐

The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Investigator's name:

Carly Edmunds

---

Investigator's Signature

Date:

---

Appendix E  
Interview Schedule: One

**Questions**

Can you tell me how old you are?

How many children do you have? And how old are they?

What is your relationship status?

What is your highest level of education?

For how many years have you been incorporating work and family roles?

What is your current occupation and on average, how many hours a week does this job initial?

**Interview Questions**

Can you tell me how your work, family and other roles relate to each other?

Can you tell me about how you came about incorporating work and family roles?

Are there another other roles that significantly influence your life?

For each role identified, how do you think this role influences your wellbeing? (I.e how do these roles create positive and negative effects on your well-being?)

Do you think that any aspect of your occupation that influences your well-being?

Do you think there are any particular aspects of your social life that influence your well-being?

How do all of these experiences interact?

Do you have any strategies that help you balance multiple demands?

Can you explain to me what your ideal life would be?

Do you have any attitudes, beliefs or thoughts about working mothers participating in multiple environments?

Is there anything else you would like to add?



Appendix F  
Interview Schedule: Two

**Questions**

Can you tell me how old you are?

How many children do you have? And how old are they?

What is your relationship status?

What is your highest level of education?

For how many years have you been incorporating work and family roles?

What is your current occupation and on average, how many hours a week does this job initial?

**Interview Questions**

Can you tell me how your work, family and other roles relate to each other?

Can you tell me about how you came about incorporating work and family roles?

Are there another other roles that significantly influence your life?

For each role identified, how do you think this role influences your wellbeing? (I.e how do these roles create positive and negative effects on your well-being?)

Do you think you have personal attributes that enable you to deal with the demands of multiple environments?

How do these personal attributes influence your relationships?

Do you think that any aspect of your occupation that influences your well-being?

Do you think there are any particular aspects of your social life that influence your well-being?

Do you have any strategies that help you balance multiple demands?

How do all of these experiences interact?

How do these experiences relate to your personality?

How do these experiences relate to your relationships?

Can you explain to me what your ideal life would be?

Do you have any attitudes, beliefs or thoughts about working mothers participating in multiple environments?

Is there anything else you would like to add?